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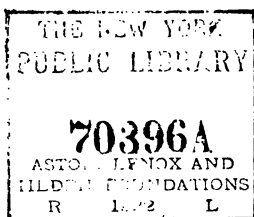
By

KATRINA TRASK



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FREE NOT BOUND

FREE NOT BOUND

I

SWADDLING-BANDS

“FOR to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.’ ”

David Dearford read these words aloud.

“David!”

Protest rang clear from Elizabeth Dearford's voice. She turned and left the room. Her light step made light sound upon the polished floor; her feet had not forgotten the measures of the dance.

David Dearford knew the room—fair-furnished and joy-flooded a moment before—to be desolate and bare. Where was she? Out among her April flowers, caressing them in that bewitching way of hers? David sat by the open window; underneath, the garden lay, in the hesitating blush and bloom of early spring. By bending forward he could command the garden, but he kept his eyes upon the unread page. Perchance she was not there, after all, but in the upper chamber—her room and his.

“David!”

She was beside him. She had taken off her matronly cap; her soft hair was loose about her face. “David, I did not like that, but I have concluded not to be angry; instead, I have come back to have a serious argument.”

She seated herself in the high, stiff chair, with crossed hands demure.

“Tell me, sir, by what intellectual twist of the text do you claim it to be ‘carnally minded’ to give the afternoon, or a part of it, to your wife and to love?”

“By none, Elizabeth; it were folly to ask the question. It is merely that, inasmuch as we pleasure ourselves in personal indulgence when there is an immediate duty to be done, we fail to be spiritually minded. There is a time for everything; now, it is the time and my immediate duty to prepare for the meeting in which I take a deacon’s part this afternoon; I cannot give the hour to my own delight.”

Elizabeth tossed her shining head to her rebellious thought—what a twang of the pedagogue, the sermoniser!

How the virility of his personality contradicted this settled habit of speech! Bah! these New Englanders! Around their vigorous minds, their steadfast hearts, their living souls, they have kept, too long, tight swaddling-bands, retarding growth. A benumbing formula restrains the man. Even David's voice, when he spoke as he spoke then, was exasperating by its contradiction. It suggested a voice ordained by nature to read Prophecy with high promise and melodious songs of victory; but strictly schooled to read, instead, the Law to those who needed admonition, and to himself without concession. Elizabeth rose swiftly, as though impelled.

"Yesterday, it was the time to drill the Minute-Men. The day before, it was the time for the Town Meeting.

The day before that, it was the time to talk to those men from Boston.—When is my time, David?”


Straight and tall she stood as a young fir-tree; instinct from brow to finger-tips with palpitating life; warm white and flushed beneath with rose-pink that came and went to change of moods in her—moods as swift to change as April skies. Her eyes, seeking David’s answer to her plea, were more star-like than blue flowers, more flower-like than stars. A woman for a man’s delight by every favour of her grace, yet David made no move. His eyes, however, were unbound; they fanned the flame of her mood. She came and knelt beside him.

“David, sometimes duty and delight are the same thing; both are of God; but, even if it were not so, a

with gentle but unrelenting hand put her from him, and left the room. She knelt tense a moment, then sprang to her full height, defiant; rebellion, protest, anger, leaping with quick tide in every pulse. In her, at last, the forces of her native race defied the forces of the race that she had tried to make her own. The hot blood of reckless cavaliers surged in her veins to challenge this chill New England power which held her in thrall. The stone wall of David's will had often confronted her, but never until to-day had his hand put her from him; never until to-day had he turned away from that for which a woman cannot ask in vain and brook the slight. Ah! How she hated him! He looked upon the human as contrary to the divine. Hours of comradeship were apart from duty.

The rapture born of God—for no woman could know rapture were it born of flesh alone—he labelled personal indulgence, and pigeon-holed to wait its turn. And in all this her glowing mind, her passion-soul was antithetical to his. Yes, she hated him,—and yet—and yet—. Far out through the open window she could see the great stretch of lonely country; her mind, going beyond her eyes, saw the forest, then the wilderness—untried, unbroken. Was it a light thing to have chosen this to the softness and ease of her father's house? A counter-wave of remembrance caught her, warm, compelling. She wanted to remember barrenness, sacrifice, hardness, coldness; she was remembering, instead, the unspeakable sweetness of that long voyage with David; remem-

bering how he had watched her in the early dawn, lying between the immensities of sea and sky; how he had soothed and comforted her under the stars, in the solemn vigils of the night. Then, on that wedding journey, two years ago, it had been the time to cheer his wife even as the old Hebraic Law allowed; he had done it, as David Dearford did all things, with concentrated purpose; the force of his intellect, the magnetism of his dauntless will, had been arrayed to woo her, win her, bind her; the bliss of his dominance had gotten into her being then, for all time; she knew it, even beneath the pride and tumult of the moment; knew that, in spite of all that was or was not, the truth remained; he held the key to the very forces she waged against him.



Cling-clang! Cling-clang! the bell rang out from the meeting-house upon the hill. Elizabeth, robed in sobriety, walked on her way, and no man saw the storm.

Icily ugly was the familiar meeting-house. The blank, whitewashed walls, the garish glare from the uncurtained windows of yellow-white, gave her mind a dull ache. She gazed straight forward, her eyes fastened on the high, rigid pulpit, but her inward vision saw—as it had not seen in two years—the colour-flamed, storied windows of the great cathedral, shadow-softened, curving in flowering stone.

David met her at the door, not knowing that her spirit had crossed the sea. Would he speak of what had happened, seeking remembrance? No. It was not his way; but, yes—surely he

would atone—had he not put her from him and denied a natural plea?

“A very excellent sermon, Elizabeth; did you not think so?”—David spoke, at last.

“No, I thought it cruel, wicked, and—absolute nonsense.”

It was done! The zealously builded, carefully guarded wall of circumspection levelled in a moment for the fleeting gratification of a fling. Repentance followed quick on the trail of wilful speech, but before she had yielded to her softened mood his words again flashed her anger.

“My duty as a deacon would bid me reprove you, though you be my wife, Elizabeth.”

“Indeed! You would beat me, perchance, as your meek and lowly followers of Christ beat the Quakers for

serving Him in their own way. Here, do your duty." She drew off her glove and held out her hand.

David was keenly conscious of that upturned palm, but he made no move.

"Do not say such childish words, Elizabeth; they ill become Deacon Dearford's wife."

"I was Sir George Harcott's daughter before I was Deacon Dearford's wife."

"But now you are my wife, Elizabeth, and will be guided by me. 'The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church.'"

Elizabeth threw back her head impatiently; her nostrils dilated.

"How men drag that glorious simile down to their farriers and forge it into a chain with their literalism! Have

you ever thought *how* Christ is the 'head of the Church'? Patience—comprehension—tolerance! No condemnation, *ever*, except of the hypocrites and Pharisees. If husbands were like Christ in their headship—then—ah!"

David was keenly thrust with a new thought; the latent element in him stirred; but he had been taught formalism with his alphabet.

"Christ was never tolerant of sin," he said stiffly.

"No, but He never condemned, despised the sinner—only the Pharisees and hypocrites, who claimed they did not sin."

"But, Elizabeth——"

"Think of the woman taken in adultery!" she interrupted breathlessly, as though swayed by a freer, wider reve-

lation of the truth. "To her He said, 'Neither do I condemn thee.' Think of the woman of Samaria! To her He gave no rebuke, though He summed up a list of her sins; no rebuke, ah—no rebuke, only, instead, with infinite graciousness, the offer of living water! No one could help worshipping Him for that divine unblaming, that generous mercy. Do you know a *single living man* who could have resisted reading her a lecture for her seven husbands? Think of Peter! He denied Him three times, and, in return, Christ gave him three opportunities of expressing his love. It is a great gift to give any one—the opportunity to express love"—this with an arch look. "But Parson Stunt," she went on, "in his '*very excellent sermon*' this afternoon, had no mercy for the sinner; he

simply doled out fire and brimstone without measure, without stint."

Elizabeth spoke quickly, hotly; the barriers were down; the pent tide must flow. Something in David's face stayed her — perhaps frightened her a little; if she was afraid of anything on earth, it was of that look on David's face. In more persuasive tones she made her appeal.

"David, did you not see what a hard, cruel sermon it was?"

"No, Elizabeth; to me it was a most edifying discourse."

Edifying discourse! David's very vocabulary—when he was in what Elizabeth called his "Cotton Mather mood"—irritated her; but, by a strong effort, she curbed her tongue.

They had out-walked the meeting-folk, and were now alone; the country

was covered with its misty veil of April green; they climbed the hill. The sun had set—a great crimson ball; the birds were flying in flocks above their heads, calling to each other with answering song. The Sabbath day was done; there were no duties to town or state to-day; now, perchance, as he had nothing else to do, David would think it meet to regard their wedded love—this indulgence which he had put under his feet, silencing or expressing at will. No; now, he should not. If his moment of hunger had come, she would teach him what it was to wait. Why should she be disciplined all day, schooled to suit his dogma and his enterprise, and he have his own fulfilment the moment his well-regulated mind permitted itself desire!

“Elizabeth!”

Was this wooing, compelling voice the one that had, but now, so coolly talked of “edifying discourse”!

Elizabeth kept her head turned from David, watching the westward flight of birds.

“Elizabeth!”

She might allow herself a stolen glance; it would be some compensation to see the change on his face—that change that always came when he had reached the hour for the master to admit the vassal—the head, the heart. He stood against the golden glory of the sky, a strong man, power in every line. “Sweetheart!” he said. And she went straight to his arms; straight as the homing bird to yonder nest. He was her master, he was her lord; when he called her, she must come. He was

strong enough to conquer desire, self. Had this not been true, he had been too weak to conquer her; but, now——!

The golden glory faded from the sky; the soft twilight fell upon the hill; the shadows shut them in. As they came down in the gathering dusk, Elizabeth walked with winged feet; she was saying over and over to herself,

“‘He that loveth, flieth, runneth, and rejoiceth; he is free and is not bound.’”

Thomas à Kempis was speaking of the love of God—but Elizabeth Dearford was not.

II

CREDO

“DEACON DEARFORD, we are grieved to call upon this errand, but the Lord’s command is laid upon us, and we cannot shirk it.”

“Certainly not, but I think you misapprehend.”


David was sitting in the parlour, a sparsely furnished room, fresh and fragrant with lavender. Before him were three white-haired men, who bore themselves in a manner toward Dearford that indicated his youth was balanced by some stronger qualities. Through the open window could be

heard the voice of Elizabeth, singing among her flowers. Poor heart! what was waiting for her? David felt a nameless weight upon him as he continued: "Permit me to say, Brethren, you lay too much stress upon a thoughtless word."

"It is the thoughtless word," answered Hiram Green, who seemed to be the spokesman of the deacons, "that does the mischief in this day and generation. It is the worst evil with which we have to deal. 'The stone which the builders rejected' may become the corner-stone, but the thoughtless words are the tares that choke the seed, that choke the seed,"—Hiram Green cleared his throat; choking was disagreeable,—"and we are distinctly told that for every thoughtless word there must be an account rendered."

David's face was severe. "Then I understand you to say that a woman is to be judged by her private word to her husband—the private word, taken at random, without context or sequence; and that my wife's words to me on the Sabbath, being overheard by those who had no right to listen and no warrant to repeat, are sufficient to bring this investigation upon us."

"Not exactly, Mr. Dearford, not exactly; we should put it differently. Being fully persuaded from the conduct and general conversation of Mistress Dearford that she is not walking and talking with that sobriety which becomes the wife of a deacon, we take those words, which chanced to be overheard by young and old, as the expression of the true state of heart of Mistress Dearford; and we feel that it



is our duty to investigate it, to correct the unfavourable impression which has gotten abroad, if we are mistaken; and to further root out the evil, if we are correct."

Hiram Green expanded his chest; he was conscious of a legal acumen which gave him no small degree of pride. His grandfather had been a lawyer, and Hiram Green, though he believed lawyers contrary to the Word of God, also believed the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation; and, in this case, it was not so much a matter for regret.

"Doubtless, Mr. Dearford, as deacon you see the wholesomeness of this?"

"I do." David rose, went to the window—"Elizabeth!" he called.

From the garden, her hands full of daffodils, the morning freshness in her face, stepped Elizabeth. Smiling, she greeted the three inquisitors.

"Mistress Dearford," Hiram Green began, with a stiff bow, "we have come to ask you to set forth your belief in God."

"To you—or to God?" The gamut of Elizabeth's tone might have betokened a creed.

"To us, Mistress Dearford, as the deacons of His Church; and to your husband, here, whose duty as deacon also calls him to be on the watch for tares, though they spring up in his own household."

Elizabeth looked across the room at David; the neutrality of his impersonal bearing struck her like a blow. What mattered it that her heart

divined there was a yearning tenderness beneath the formal manner! It was enough for her that he, who knew her heart, or should, sat with her questioners; that instead of chivalrous defender, peremptorily silencing them, he was as judge, waiting without words while she pitted her defence against their censorship.

“Your words,” Hiram Green continued, “said to your husband after the meeting last Sabbath, were overheard by those walking near you; the sound and edifying discourse which our pastor gave us was heard to be pronounced by you as hard, unjust—and—foolish. As it was chiefly on doctrinal points, we feel that this implies more than a mere criticism of Parson Stunt’s rhetoric; therefore it becomes necessary, because of your standing in the Church,

and the standing of your husband as deacon in said Church, that you explain fully what you meant."

And still her eyes were fixed on David. Was he to let their intimate words be hawked through the town and make no sign? His judicial calm lashed her to an impetuous impulse akin to that which made her ancestors rush upon the sword.

"Do you wish to know what I do believe, or what I do not believe?" she asked.

"Both, if you please, Mistress Dearford." Hiram Green's tone denoted a keen relish of the situation.

"I will tell you." She turned her head—there was a special grace which was her dower; she swept one after the other with storm-dark eyes. David saw that it was coming—her doom—

and his. A temptation to gather her to himself and hush the words with kisses assailed him, but he sat coldly, quietly still, and waited the event. He admitted to himself that subconsciously he had been looking to her for the way out, counting on her quick tact to parry the assault; and she had not parried; she had challenged it.

"I believe," her voice was low and reverent, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Very good," said Hiram Green.

"Whether He was of one substance with the Father, matters not," she continued.

The three men straightened themselves quickly and stiffly. Hiram Green's eyes had the look a ferret's have when it sees a rat; John Martin shook his head in paternal anxiety;

Ezra Sewall cleaned his spectacles with elaborate care; David was white to the lips.

“He was,” she went on, “the one perfect one; the one supreme revelation of the Divine Who has ever lived; the complete expression of the Father, from Whom He came. He was the Divine Word from the beginning, which Word expressed the mind of the Father, and everything which contradicts that Word—His message as He gave it—is unrighteous and of human invention.”

Hiram Green cleared his throat and hitched his trousers; his mind was not quick enough to be quite certain, until he had had time to think it out, whether this was orthodoxy or heresy. David waited.

“And I think”—Elizabeth lifted her head fearlessly—“that Parson Stunt’s

sermon on the Sabbath contradicted that Word. And I think, also, that words in the Old Testament, from which the text was taken, are sometimes of human invention—a libel upon God.”

“A *libel upon God!*” It is probable that the three deacons had never put so strong an emphasis upon four words before.

“Yes,” Elizabeth answered; “because it makes God contradict Himself, and we know it is impossible for God to lie. We know, with every instinct within us, that harmony is the fundamental law of God. If Christ was the Word, and the Word was from the beginning, Christ must have expressed the mind of the Father from the beginning. That seems to me the simplest logic. How could the Father,

Who is unalterable, unchangeable, express Himself at one time in one way, and at another time in a completely different way? And yet, the Gospel of love and peace, which Christ gave us from the mind of the Father, is very different from the interpretation of the mind of the Father which the Jews sometimes gave in the Old Testament."

"Mistress Dearford," said Hiram Green, sternly, looking at her intently from under his shaggy brows, "is it possible that you do not believe that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost in the writing of the Old Testament?"

"When it agrees with the Word which Christ said was from the beginning, I do; when it does not, I do not," she answered.

“Will you be kind enough to state clearly and very plainly, if you please, precisely what you mean, Mistress Dearford? I do not think we quite understand you,” said John Martin; he hoped there was some way out of this slough.

“You deny the law and the prophets, which Christ said He came to fulfil. Ahem!” Again Hiram Green cleared his throat.

“No,” Elizabeth replied, quietly, “I do not deny the law or the prophets; nor do I deny the inspiration of the men who gave the law and the prophecy. What I deny is the infallibility of those men, and the accuracy of the transmission of their inspiration; I deny that that is *always* of God.”

A sharp snap of tone escaped Hiram Green. Elizabeth lifted her hand with an imperious gesture.

"I will endeavour to state briefly my position, if I may."

"I desire that you do so now, fully, Elizabeth," David said tersely.

"As I have already told you," Elizabeth continued, "I believe in God the Father, and I believe that the Truth—the Word—that which is the mind and command of the Father, was from the beginning. Until Christ came, it had not been revealed to man. Until Christ came, men were feeling after it in every country, in every age, in vain. The Jews were a people who, in an age of paganism and idolatry, kept fast hold of the spiritual concept of a great and only God. They sought Him, prayed to Him, called Him their King; and to them came the inspiration that comes to any person or people true to a great spiritual ideal. The Lord did

speak to their hearts as He speaks to yours—to mine. But they translated that message into the simple, barbaric language of a primitive people, and they had not the spiritual development or power of discrimination to know when it was the Divine within them that spoke, and when it was the self. When Moses led the children of Israel out from bondage, he was following the Divine voice of guidance, and was inspired; when he killed the Egyptian, he was following the evil passions within himself, and was not inspired. If with acts, so with words. When David said, 'Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption,' he was inspired to express the word of the Almighty; when he said, 'Cut off mine enemies, and

destroy all them that afflict my soul,' he was not inspired. For Christ, Who is the interpretation of the Almighty from the beginning, said we must do precisely the contrary. He tells us we must love our enemies and pray for them. These two opposites cannot both express the mind of the Father; and Christ said He knew the mind of His Father. It seems to me that Christ's Gospel is the crucible in which we can try the words of the early Scriptures to know what is of God and what is of man."

The deacons sat in profound silence; they desired to be just men,—a hard task for Hiram Green,—but even had they been inclined to interrupt, there was that in David's bearing which would have prevented them. David Dearford was not a man to be gainsaid,

even by greybeards. He now turned to Elizabeth—there was a metallic ring in his voice: “Then you believe the Bible is not true, as a whole, Elizabeth?”

“Indeed, no, David. I believe it is more true than any literal truth could make it, for I believe it holds an eternal truth far beyond words or facts.”

“That is to say, you believe lies are beyond facts,” Hiram Green said, with a sneer.

Elizabeth kept her temper. “No, I believe a spiritual truth is far beyond a mere verbal truth. Take, for example, that story of Abraham and Isaac; as it is told, it is simply a story, Hebraic, local, inconsistent with a Father who pitieth His children. If it was the spiritual apprehension of the supreme truth of the power of renunciation and resignation that comes from communion with

God; the truth that the father, the mother, can, through God's help, resign their children to His keeping, making no rebellious outcry—if it was this conception, put into the primitive language of the time, it becomes a greater, a more far-reaching truth; a spiritual comfort and hope for every sorrowing father-heart and mother-heart until the end of time—to-day, as then." For the first time, Elizabeth's voice faltered.

David—in spite of the long-cultured habit of holding himself strictly to the subject in hand—no longer saw the three deacons, the spring sunshine; again, it was that winter morning, grim and grey, and he was standing in the upper room, looking upon the little wrinkled face of the baby who had battled for his life, to die in

winning it; and looking upon Elizabeth, lying pale and sorrow-stricken, but with eyes that shone with unquestioning faith.

“Brethren,” he said, “this is more serious than I supposed. I acknowledge your right, your wisdom, in investigating it; but I beg you will permit me to have a consultation, now, with my wife alone. We cannot doubt the power of the Spirit; all will be well, by God’s grace.”

“As you please, Deacon Dearford, but you must admit that this is a matter that goes farther than your own hearthstone.”

The deacons shook hands with David, and bowed stiffly to Elizabeth. Elizabeth swept them an elaborate courtesy, which was neither relevant nor profitable, but which was—Elizabeth.

III

FROM ENGLAND

THIS is the story of Elizabeth Dearford's love. It is not a story of her times, her heresy, nor of her trial and the verdict of the Church. Times, events are merest incidents. Love has no chronology, is not confined to locality. New England, Old England, Rome and Greece, Yesterday and To-day, are but the setting for the drama of the soul. Nor is love dependent upon events. Events are but asides in that great drama. Let those who would know of the times in which Elizabeth lived and loved, search the

fascinating pages of Fiske, MacMaster, and Woodrow Wilson. Let those who would know the details of her trial search the records of the old Sutton church.

In brief, Elizabeth Dearford was tried before the congregation and convicted of heresy. Her name was dropped from the church roll. The Sutton circle of men and women also dropped her from that unlettered roll which makes a common interest in a common cause.

To her, all this was of small moment: she had been intellectually true to her standard; she was willing to abide by the results. But David and his attitude—that was intolerable! One long fruitless argument—then—David had let things take their course. On that dreadful day, when she had sat alone

in the meeting-house, David had sat in the seat of the deacons, cold, unmoved, inexorable. That his face had been as set as though it were his own death-mask, and that his eyes had held the shadow of agony, had counted for naught. Not one word of reproach had passed his lips to her when they were alone in their home. Instead, a plea:

“Forgive me, Elizabeth—it was my duty.”

“Duty! Duty!” Elizabeth had answered, in quick scorn. “To what ghastly crimes duty has stood sponsor! It was duty burned Cranmer, Savonarola, Joan of Arc. It was duty burned those poor creatures called witches, because they were cleverer than their neighbours. It was duty which whipped the patient, pacific

Quakers around the streets. Ugh! Duty is the devil you worship in this horrible land. I presume in the end you will burn me with that same loving-kindness and saint-like politeness they used toward those Salem ladies a few years ago."

After that, David had said no word of the affair, but had tried by every deed and every tenderness silently to manifest his sorrow. This, Elizabeth resented. She scarcely spoke to him. To his every endeavour to re-establish their personal life, she had turned a cold silence that paralysed the fount of emotion which she alone had opened in David's heart. The gulf between them widened.

Elizabeth could not forgive. She had won but half the battle; she had yet to learn that, in all the great

philosophies of the world, pre-eminently that of the Christ, liberty and freedom—for which she stood so bravely—go hand-in-hand with self-forgetfulness and gracious humility. She was angry, bitter, resentful.

She, who flamed fiercely against the dogma of punishment, was not unwilling to give David his punishment to the full.

Reconcilement might have come—it is possible—had David been more at home, but in those days Elizabeth saw little of David. He was in the forefront of events; Town Meetings, public discussions, took him constantly away. A benumbing chill lay upon him by night, by day; he was like a man from whom all sunshine had been suddenly withdrawn; but he went steadily on, working unflaggingly—that was the

man. Elizabeth saw, through the fog of her fury, what otherwise would have won her tribute. And still the gulf widened.

It was, in truth, a time when personal grievances had to wait for larger issues. The latent discontent of a vigorous young people was welling to an outbreak; and the obstinacy of a pompous, self-willed King across the sea was not calculated to retard it.

Lord North, to whom the King's obstinacy was both a peril and a defence at the same time, silenced all courageous interference with: "The King will have it so; he means to try the question with America."

Indeed! America, forsooth, was preparing well her answer; she would not be slow of speech when the moment

came to reply; nor would there be any vacillating uncertainty in her response.

“Elizabeth, we shall have to fight, I fear; there is no other way. May the Lord have mercy upon us!”

David said this as he came in late one afternoon from a Town Meeting. Elizabeth grew white to the lips; the polished mahogany table, the shining brass andirons, the geraniums in the window, danced, spun. What she might have allowed her heart, in the sudden surprise of the moment, no one can tell. Mr. Dunmore of Boston had come home with David to supper; he was standing near.

“David!” was the one word she said; the tensivity of tone was startling.

“Yes, Mistress Dearford, we will fight; we are getting ready.” Mr.

Dunmore spoke with a relish that set Elizabeth's teeth on edge.

"Why can we not have patience?" she ventured.

"Patience? What have we had? The infamous humiliation and injustice we have endured are unparalleled in history; we are the puppet of a narrow, selfish bigot."

"But his Majesty is not to blame; it is Lord North," she argued.

"Lord North! Pooh!" Mr. Dunmore answered scornfully; "he is the buffet and the buffer of the King, who, by the by, is smarter than they think him. There is no stopping it now; it is coming—Praise the Lord! We will get even with Georgie yet."

"Are you speaking of our King, Mr. Dunmore?"

Elizabeth's old loyalty leaped out.

"Our King is the King of kings, Elizabeth." Elizabeth turned and looked at David as he spoke; in that moment she saw, as by clairvoyant vision, the mind of her husband—toward the times and toward the state.

"Pardon me, David, but this being so, why disobey the distinct command of our King of kings to overcome evil with good? Why fight?"

David's eyes flashed an answer, but before the answer reached his lips Mr. Dunmore broke in: "Tut, tut, Mistress Dearford, that 's all very well theoretically, but practically it 's another matter; we cannot be sentimentalists."

"Was Christ a sentimentalist?" she asked.

"Oh—no,—of course not; but—but—He was Divine." Mr. Dunmore

had a whining voice that rasped Elizabeth's nerves.

"I am not orthodox,"—Elizabeth glanced at David; she saw the pained look on his face, but it did not stay her,—"in point of fact, I am a convicted heretic; and yet the teaching of Christ, His lessons, His philosophy, are too convincing to me to admit of any justification of war, ever. Christ's words are everything or nothing; His code must be useless or supreme. Heavens! I should rather be a worshipper of Mars, out and out, than a follower of Christ, and approve of war. One's conscience and one's moral sense would not be so distorted."

David refrained from answering—he knew Elizabeth's mood; it betokened no quiet argument; he wanted no heated discussion; he was too strained

with the events of the day. Crossing lances with Elizabeth had always held keen intellectual zest for David, but in these latter days of severance he had avoided issues. David was wise in his generation.

Mr. Dunmore had no restraining motive; he branched forth in a long disquisition upon the value of war, the moral necessity, citing as authority the great Jehovah, always ready with His martial orders. Elizabeth looked at him as he talked. He was not worth while; why waste her breath upon a man like that? But there was something she wanted David to hear, so she said it to Mr. Dunmore.

“Let us leave the moral side of it; we will not be sentimentalists,”—her lip curled,—“we will be very practical; economic, if you please.” She put her

hand in her pocket and drew out a letter. "Let a practical man plead my side of the question; I have just received this letter from home." She emphasised the word "home," wondering if David heard. Yes; from head to heart he heard the emphasis, but he neither spoke nor looked toward her. "May I read it, Mr. Dunmore?"

"Do, do," said Mr. Dunmore, trying to keep his voice acquiescent with concession to hide any exultant note; direct personal news from England was a rare tid-bit for Mr. Dunmore.

"My brother writes," — Elizabeth turned over the pages of the letter, — "Here it is:

"Well, Bess, what of this hot-headed nonsense in the Colonies? You are all making a colossal mistake to be in such a confounded hurry. Tell

David Dearford this with my compliments. If you will only wait and practise the patience that a man would have in ordinary legal negotiations, things will come your way with credit and gain, without the tragic conditions of brother fighting brother; without wasting and impoverishing yourselves, and making an enemy of your best friend. Here is Chatham working for you like a trump among the Lords; here is Burke getting the ear of the House—and the House by the ears at the same time. Public sentiment is much more in your favour than you imagine—more than it should be, to my thinking. And forsooth, you will kick it all over in a fit of temper, like a small mad boy. Just wait; don't be hot-headed.

“In the House to-day Burke made a speech that would have made your

mouth water if you had been there. I could see your big eyes shining in the gallery where you used to sit. I did n't at all agree with Burke, but oh my, Bess, did n't Burke agree with you! I could not resist jotting down some sentences on a scrap of paper to send you, because they sounded so like your own opinions which you used to fling at me in that fiery way of yours. Now, was not that very magnanimous of me?

““ Do you remember, Bess, how you used to fight about peace? You see, you could n't avoid fighting, even in the cause of peace. To tell you the truth, the magnanimity of giving my erstwhile little adversary points is, in reality, a bribe for a nice long letter from her. Well, here are Burke's words:

“““ My opinion is much more in

favour of prudent management than of force, considering force not as an odious, but as a feeble instrument. . . . Force alone is temporary. It may subdue for a moment, but it does not remove the necessity for subduing again. . . . My next objection is the uncertainty; force failing, no further hope of reconciliation is left. . . . A further objection to force is that you impair the object by your very endeavour to preserve it; the thing you fought for is not the thing you recover, but depreciated, shrunk, wasted, consumed in the contest." Hurrah for Burke and Bess!"

Elizabeth laid down the letter. "The rest is personal," she said, "but there speaks against war a man who can scarcely be called a sentimentalist or a moralist on purely practical grounds."

“But,” sniffed Mr. Dunmore, “he is talking about the aggressors using force; that’s another matter. We are the aggrieved.”

What a stupid man! How some men go round in a treadmill and come back to the starting-point each time.

“What is true, is true; a principle is a principle—for the cow-herd or the King. Come, let us have supper.”

She rose, a subtle smile hovering. She knew Mr. Dunmore was the kind of man who would be more impressed by a conclusive sentence than he would be by any amount of simple common-sense. She did not wish to impress Mr. Dunmore; if she was conscious of any wish concerning him, it was that he would go home; she wanted supper to be over.

David’s eyes, which had been


charged with disavowal and disagreement as she read her brother's letter, sparkled with humour now. Had they met Elizabeth's, there would have been a flash struck between them; but Elizabeth was walking to the dining-room, and, when the table was reached, there was grace before meat.

IV

PRIDE

DAVID had sought in every way his reserved nature could devise to bridge the gulf between them, but Elizabeth turned to him a front as impenetrable as a wall of ice. So strong is custom and domestic habit, however, she had made no outward break to manifest the severance of her life from his. She lay down at night sharing his bed, as she sat at meat sharing his board; but nothing is more severing than a lifeless form. It was then, David—who understood her, though he understood her not—

accepted her withdrawal as conclusive, final. There was that fineness within the man which would woo her and entreat her to the threshold of their chamber; but within their chamber, where he might have used his masculine dominance to over-persuade her, if he would, he must become her courtier, subject to her will. In the simple reverence of his nature he could no more have done otherwise than he could have struck her. He had struck her in a fatal way, well he knew, but that had been stern obligation laid upon him, burdening his heart. This other would be indulgence, easing his heart. There was the wide difference to David that there was between duty and delight: the one, difficult but righteous; the other, sweet but damnable.



Elizabeth vaguely apprehended this, and yet a calm soul is ever an enigma to a warmer and more passionate soul. Perhaps some hope flamed up within her that he would not be content with quiet phrases of appeal, with tender, gracious acts, propitiating; that his will would rise to the force of an uncontrolled torrent,—fierce, sweeping, undeterred,—overbearing her and breaking down with masterful hand those barriers that shut her into cold and lonely isolation, winning her, in spite of herself, to warmth and love, to the bliss of forgiveness and of peace. As week followed week, and he did not, the severance became more complete.

David's code was not an easy one for a virile man to compass, but to David the difficulty of the honourable did not count. To-night, something


stronger than familiar stirred him as he went late to their chamber. He opened the door quietly. Elizabeth turned and faced him as he entered. She wore a loose white gown; her beautiful hair fell about her; a glowing beauty suffused her. David's code was imperilled; it swayed in the balance with desire; a quick sense of ownership, of possession, tingled within him. What mattered her mood? He stretched out his hand and took a step toward her—then remembrance came.

"Pardon me, Elizabeth, I thought you were asleep," he said, and went out from her into the garden. "Desire must be mutual and the marriage-touch agreement," he murmured, as he put a strong curb upon himself, "else it is as great a sin as any other."

He walked for an hour among the sleeping flowers, between the lines of pungent box, contemplating the beauty of the summer night, the majesty of the full-orbed moon, and the silent stars. When he went in again, Elizabeth was lying in the great downy bed with shut eyes, asleep—he thought. She was not asleep, she was tensely, feverishly awake; re-living the past, besieging the present, forecasting the future. When sleep came to David, she opened her aching eyes. Clasping her hands under her head, she gazed straight before her into the moonlit room, as those who would see the future, by occult means, gaze into a crystal ball.

A new element enters, to-night, into her wakeful fever. The times are very evil; the hour of the inevitable is surely drawing near. Knowing, as she


does, the pugnacious insistence of the British mind, and the rising self-assertion of this young shoot of the same tree, she cannot blind herself to the oncoming doom which will grind her beneath the upper and the nether millstone. But oh! not yet—not yet! Not until the full chord has been struck again between David's heart and hers! Bitter as it is to feel the chill between them, he is here! She loves him—yes—loves him perhaps most, now, when she hates him. She raised herself on her strong, lithe arm, and bent over David as he lay asleep. The moonlight flooded the bed. Well would it have been for David if he had awakened then; it would have given him a picture for the treasure-house of memory. The serene dignity and quiet of David's face on the pillow beside her



made her heart flame with protest at his philosophy to which she could not rise; but there was something in the contour of the face that brought poignant remembrance to move her more than all his speech had done by day. How very pale he was! What deep lines had settled there in these last two months! She had not let herself see them before; and on either side of that strong forehead were streaks of white in the brown head that had lain upon her breast. Ah, David—David! The task that was laid upon you was the bitterest task your heart could know; but you could not flinch, for you were you;—and, David, these days have not been easy for you, though you take them with stern philosophy. What if she should circle his head with her arm, and wake

him with a kiss? She did not doubt his joy, his thanksgiving, nor the reconciliation that would follow; she could foresee the glad light leap into his sorrowful eyes at her touch.

Why does she hesitate? What place has love for pride? Why does she wait? Can unforgiveness live when love is in the heart? The world of rapture, all the world of bliss, may be opened by her lightest touch, her softest whisper.—HARK! WHAT IS THAT? The ring of horses' hoofs, coming, coming, clinking down the road; nearer, nearer—a loud, sharp rap upon the door beneath. God! It is the call! She needs no telling—the call for Minute-Men. It is too late—too late! The summons has come in the silence of the night, and she has no oil in her lamp. Her bridegroom will pass by, the door will be



shut, and she will be left in the darkness—the darkness!

Those were the days of literalism: Minute - Men were minute - men. It seemed a short moment, and David stood equipped, holding out his arms. Straight she went to her home, but reconciliation now was hand in hand with renunciation, and sweetness was merged in awe and prescient sense of danger and of death. Swift words, close clinging a brief second—then he left her. She heard his firm tread down the garden path. Ah! Her coldness! Her hardness! Her pride! The waste of life! The waste of love! All her heart was aflame within her; follow him she must, out, out into the night, to danger and to death! She could not bear it. She ran down the garden path to overtake him; at the

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gate she stopped. No, she must not follow him; life is life; men are men; war is war. She parted the stalks of the hollyhocks and leaned over the fence, her face whiter than the whitest flower that blossomed in all that row; far out she leaned, until she could see his tall figure moving down the silent road. He walked firm and straight and fearless.

“David!” she called, “David!”—Her call was a sobbing cry, but only the echoes came back to her from the night.

V

REMORSE

SARAH BRUSH came over to comfort her when daylight came.

“Now keep up a good heart, Mistress Dearford; ’t ain’t at all likely he ’ll be killed. He ’s a tall man, to be sure, and tall men make the best targets, but he ’s strong and tough, and unless he ’s shot he ’ll come home all right. But pshaw! Don’t look so peaked and down-spirited. There ain’t going to be any war, anyway; when that old fool of a King sees what we ’re made of, he ’ll give in; he ain’t going to fight his own children.”

Elizabeth thought of poor little Johnnie Brush walking lamely past her window for many days after his encounter with his mother.

Sarah Brush went on talking in her nasal twang. "Ain't I glad Jeremiah Brush is dead! I've been giving thanks all the morning, since I heard about the call, for he 'd 'a' had to go, and he would 'a' surely got killed; it would 'a' been just his luck, and I 'd 'a' had to be a widow all over again; and there could n't 'a' been any funeral, because if they get shot I guess they 're buried where they fall—For the land's sake, Mistress Dearford, don't look so peaked-like!"

Through the day, other women came and went. Elizabeth had been left quite alone since she had been dropped from the Church, but David was the

pride of Sutton town. There was a loyal tribute due to him, not unmixed with curiosity as to how this strange Englishwoman would meet the situation; and, having come, the women met each other and stayed. Household affairs could wait on this eventful day.

More than anything in the world, just then, Elizabeth wanted to be alone. The well-spring of speech was dried within her. What did these women know of life or love?—but she could not bid them go home. After a while the monotonous buzz-buzz, chit-chat, seemed to become an established fact in the world; it seemed to have been going on from the beginning of time, and would last until the firmament was rolled together as a scroll. It worked like an anodyne, a narcotic;

the effect of it upon Elizabeth was benumbing; lethargy seemed to enfold her. From time to time some fragment of their speech reached her, like words heard across deep water. As the day wore on, she vaguely felt, despite the lethargy, a sense of displeasure in the atmosphere. They had come to pow-wow over the hour, the events, and she had been struck into remote silence—a crime against the community, not to be brooked by female minds in stirring times.

“Did n’t you love your husband, Mistress Dearford?” Buxom Mistress Pinkham hurled this question suddenly.

To Elizabeth, it was as if a blind man had said to her, “Do you see the sun?” The lethargy passed for a moment. “Because, if you loved him,” Mistress

Pinkham continued, "you would be of a cheerful countenance, worthy of his wife. Now I sent John Pinkham off with a smart clap on the back for good luck, and a merry laugh. The *loyal* wives of Americans can't be soft-hearted these days, Mistress Dearford."

There was no mistaking Elizabeth's swift glance; no lethargy there; she had heard the emphasis on the word *loyal*; it was a challenge. Elizabeth turned with an air that could mean but one thing.

"Even a soft heart is better than an empty place where the heart should be, Mistress Pinkham," she said.

"Mistress Dearford gave as good as she got," said the women on the way home; "there was nothing soft-looking

about her, withal she 's so down; she looked as if she could fight King George himself."

"Not she," said another woman, tartly; "say, rather, she looked as if she could fight us all in the name of King George—the saucy Tory!"

Alas! Elizabeth had made an enemy of Mistress Pinkham. In the absence of John Pinkham, his wife was to fulfil his duties as postmistress.

The women had departed; Elizabeth stood alone in the house, alone but for Miranda, the serving-woman. Miranda was faithful, but as stern and uncompromising as an embodied text from Leviticus. Elizabeth walked to David's desk; the numb torpor of the day fell from her; keen sorrow was awake; hunger and thirst and unspeakable anguish.

Parting is hard at best; to every spirit finely attuned there is ever the foretaste of that final parting, a pre-science of death. Where memory is poignant with beauty, where love has been weaving the thread that was snapped, there is some solace, some comfort, as sweet as minor music; but when bitterness and self-reproach mingle, when memory is of coldness and spent days, then parting finds no solace.

Twilight fell. At the old hour, Miranda, wearing her straight merino soldierly, walked to Elizabeth and held out the large Bible. "'T is time for prayers," she said; her mood was more imperative than subjunctive.

Elizabeth looked at her, knew herself on trial, not only in the eyes of Miranda, but on trial again in Sutton;

for Miranda's eyes were no sharper than her tongue. Elizabeth quailed, strove a moment for self-victory, then gave up the fight. "I cannot, Miranda."

"You can't?" Miranda's eyes were probing as lancets.

"No." Elizabeth ended the ordeal, turned and went up to her room—her room and David's; she locked the door; she threw wide her windows; she walked the floor, crushing her hands until they showed red where the nails had cut. Elizabeth could grieve as only she could love. She felt herself going under the whirlpool. Then, unpuritanically, uncanonically, and unorthodoxically, she called upon the Infinite; she reached out—out, up—up, through space, through darkness, through silence, after the Ever-

lasting One, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate, beseeching with mute lips for help, for courage, for strength. And it came to her.

VI

IN THE NIGHT

“Confusion to the Tories,
That black infernal name,
In which Great Britain glories,
For ever to her shame;
We ’ll send each foul revolter
To smutty Africa,
Or noose him in a halter
In North America.” *

OUT in the night these words hissed
and sputtered between set teeth.

Stamping, knocking, and hard laughter mingled with the words. Elizabeth awoke. The hasty putting on of clothes took the minutes of the song; it came to an end; then came up the hoarse

* Peter St. John, A.D. 1765.

cry: "Where 's the Englishwoman? Where 's the Englishwoman?"

Elizabeth was trembling from head to foot. The sudden start from sleep! The empty place! The darkness! The night! She sought Miranda; human sympathy, human touch, she must have; she laid her cold hand on the impassive arm.

"*Miranda, it is a mob!* What shall we do?"

Miranda's little eyes narrowed sharply. "If you are an Englishwoman, I guess you 'll have to abide by the consequences."

A cold plunge gives chilling, but it brings tonic. "I will abide by them." She moved to the door. Miranda made an unwilling, awkward gesture of protest.—"Better not; 't is safest here."

"Stand back, Miranda, and let me pass."

David's lantern was on the table. Elizabeth lighted it; her fingers had ceased to tremble. She took her long, dark cloak from the peg and put it around her; then she opened the door and stood upon the porch. She held the lantern high above her head. The lantern served two ends: it showed Elizabeth the bitter faces of about fifty men and boys, vindictive, excited; and it showed the crowd Elizabeth's face. The full light falling showed the beautiful lines of the head, the pure oval of the cheek, the fearless, truthful eyes, and her straight, dauntless figure in the long, dark cloak.

"Here is the Englishwoman. Who wishes her?"—Elizabeth's voice rang clear.

The temper of the crowd had not found itself, as yet. Unconsciously, the men had counted on skulking and hiding; they thought that as they threatened there would be abundant time for the spirit of active ferocity to gather and work out its plan. The silence of surprise fell for a moment. Elizabeth used it.

“Yes, I am an Englishwoman. One greater than you has commanded us to honour our father and our mother. My father and mother were, by God’s grace, English. I cannot dishonour them nor their land. But—I left England. I came to this new land of my own free choice. I have much to thank it for. I have learned many noble things here; but there is one thing I shall not learn here,”—Elizabeth lifted her head in unconcealed

scorn,—“I shall not learn manners. I must look to England, I fear, if I would keep my own worthy of my house.”

“Oh, let her be!” “Come along!”
“She’s David Dearford’s wife!”

Elizabeth’s quick ear heard these murmurs; she sensed the temper of the crowd—it was beginning to change a trifle; she smiled her most bewitching smile.

“Won’t you come in, gentlemen? My husband is away, fighting for our country, but I will do my endeavour to entertain you as I best may.”

“No! No!” was flung back; voices halted flatly. “Thank you,” followed in embarrassed tone from some one. “She said ‘our country,’” whispered another.

Elizabeth heard him. “Certainly I



said 'our country.' " She lifted her head proudly. "David Dearford and I are one; his country is my country."

The crowd began to move. Impelled by an impulse stronger than himself, one of the young men, a handsome lad, stepped forward, his eyes glowing with something that was not contempt for the Tory. "Mistress Dearford, I am sorry for the fright we have caused you. It will be my pleasure to stand guard at your door to prevent further annoyance, that you may sleep in peace." He spoke aloud; he was a brave fellow.

Elizabeth swept a courtesy on the porch; the lantern swayed as she bent, circling her in a curve of light.

"Thank you, no, sir. It is not at all necessary. I have no fear of David Dearford's countrymen."

She stood quite still, holding her lantern to light the way; as the crowd slunk off, one or two of them threw back a shamefaced "Good-night."

When they had gone, she went into the house. Miranda grimly and silently bolted the door with a sharp, determined click, went to the cupboard, and poured out a glass of cordial; this she brought to Elizabeth.

"Here, you 'd best take this," she said; "the night air 's chilly-like."

Elizabeth was trembling again. "Miranda," she said faintly, "I said I had no fear."

"I heard you," said Miranda; "but I think the Lord 'll forgive you that lie."



VII

AN AGENT OF THE LORD

GREAT bustle stirred in John Pinkham's store; this was the village store on one side, the colony post-office on the other. Mail had come from the army—the first; and every man, woman, and child was besieging the counter. Mistress Pinkham was at her wits' end that day—what with the eager haste of the men, the babble of the children, and the hubbub of the women, the pride in her office for once was peppered with irritation.

“I wish on my soul, I do, that John Pinkham was here to tackle you all!

How can I sort out the letters when you're all talking to me at once? Give them to you to sort yourselves? that I'll not; I know too well my duty to my"—Heigh-ho! Mistress Pinkham, you had almost said King, so strong is habit—"well, to whom do I owe my duty, anyway?" she muttered below her breath. "Oh! here's one for you, Mr. Martin." Mistress Pinkham had her feminine tricks in spite of her masculine ways; when she did not know what to say, or had said the wrong thing, she covered her tracks; she went on vigorously, sorting, distributing.

"Mistress Pinkham, will you give me my letter, if you please?" Elizabeth held out her hand; she had waited until the last letter had been delivered.

"I've given all the mail I've got to

give, Mistress Dearford"; Eliza Pinkham's tones were curt.

"Is there, then, no letter for me?" Elizabeth grew white.

"I tell you, I 've given all the mail I 've got to give."


Elizabeth still lingered. Impossible! It could not be lost, because the budget from the army had come in a large package, all bound together and sealed with the seal of the captain of David's regiment. If he had written a letter, it would be there. No peril had befallen him, for John Martin was reading aloud to eager listeners snatches of a long letter to him from David, on church matters hastily dropped.

Perhaps Mistress Pinkham had no heart, or perhaps it was too well hidden with coarse flesh to stay her cruelty; she looked at Elizabeth with

narrowing eyes: "Is it likely, think you, that Deacon Dearford would be in a hurry to write to one who has made him all the trouble that you have?"

Where was Elizabeth's fire, her flash, her high spirit? She said not one word; she scarcely heard the thrust. Then it had all been a dream —the remembrance of that parting moment! It had been her heart only that had spoken! David had not forgiven her for her unforgivingness; her long, cold silence had chilled him beyond thaw!

When the gossip was over, and the town's folk had gone, Eliza Pinkham went into her back room; she removed an old knit shawl from a stout pine box in the corner, and lifted the lid. She took from the box two thick letters, one in clear, feminine hand-



writing, addressed to "David Dearford, Esquire"; this, Eliza Pinkham threw back impatiently into the box. "No, indeed," she muttered, with a nod of her sturdy head, "I 'll not have a brave man troubled with a woman's fretful whine, the courage taken clean out of him; her first letter will be sure to be a snivel. I 'll wait for the next one before I send it." The second letter she turned over and over, considering; characteristic the handwriting—clear, forceful, fine withal; "Mistress Dearford" stood forth in black and white.

"I wonder if I ought to have given it to her just yet? If it was spite that made me keep it back, then I ought; but I ain't spiteful, praise the Lord for that! It is for her good. The older women are bound to look after the younger ones, and especially after

the good of their souls. 'Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth,' and 'He bringeth down the proud in spirit.' I'm sure He knows that Elizabeth Dearford needs a little chastening,—she's got a mighty proud spirit,—and I am His agent." Eliza Pinkham dropped the letter back into the box again, and replaced the knitted shawl with a complacent smile.

The next letter that came for Elizabeth, Eliza Pinkham gave her with alacrity.

"Here's your letter, Mistress Dearford; and right glad I am to give it to you."

This was, indeed, true, for Mistress Pinkham had had her afterthoughts about the letter under the shawl. "I declare to mercy," she had said to herself one night when she could not

sleep, "I wish that letter of David Dearford's did n't lie over there so still! It's for all the world like a corpse in that corner! I can't destroy it—I have n't any right to destroy it—and I can't give it to her now—but, fol-de-rol! What's the use of bothering about one letter more or less? Another will be coming soon; one letter does n't count."

Nor would it have counted to her; there are women and women. Ah! Mistress Pinkham, with your solid flesh and stolid soul, what can you know of the substance and make of a woman upon whom "millions of strange shadows tend"? What can you divine of one who is compact of "moods as many as an April day"? There are more things in her heart than you can dream of in your

philosophy, Mistress Pinkham — your philosophy of Monday for washing, Tuesday for carding, Wednesday for spinning, Thursday for baking, Friday for soft soap and tallow dip, Saturday for cleaning — and Sunday for the Lord.

VIII

HIS LETTER

WOMEN broke their seals in public, retailed their news, stayed to gossip. Not so, Elizabeth. Close hand-clasped was her letter, this little bridge to David, over which she might tread at last to his heart, his mind; this white carrier-pigeon, which had winged its way to her desolate solitude to cheer, console, and comfort her, must she not take it to her bosom in swift shelter, even before she found its message? She turned away from the post-office.

“Does n’t she walk like a Tory?”

Now just look at her!" clacked the tongue of one of the women whose sharp eyes followed the figure of Elizabeth, as she moved with light, free step along the way.

"Hump! she walks like an unbeliever for all the world," said another.

"You spoke the truth, Mistress Earle; she holds her head as if she were saying 'No' to God."

When Elizabeth had reached the wooded path, hidden from sight under the shelter of the spreading trees, she threw back her cloak, opened her merino gown, and put the letter into its warm home; it was a touch of that dear hand far away. Her step flew swifter, freer, and she held her head more high. She walked until she reached the hill, that hill where David had kissed her on that fatal Sabbath,

long ago. She climbed the hill and seated herself under a great pine. "Now, my Beloved," she whispered. She found her letter, broke the seal, and read:

"MY WIFE:

"Just a hurried line to follow—I have no time to write to-day. I am on guard this week. I have snatched a moment to beg you, with all regret for the trouble I give you, to attend to the following details, which, in my haste of departure, I had no time nor opportunity to attend to myself."

Then was given a list of items: bills to be paid, messages to be given to this man and that, some papers to be gone over, and, at the end,—

"I hope, Elizabeth, this will not be

too much trouble. I know your graciousness and your ability, and on these two things I must depend in this emergency. Your husband,


“DAVID.”

Elizabeth sat stonily still. Surely, even a Puritan must needs be mindful of the stress and crisis of their love. Surely, that last parting demanded, by every law of justice and mercy, reference, remembrance, expression. To one of Elizabeth's temperament, and one in the tense mood that held her, “trifles light as air were confirmation strong,” and this was not a “trifle light as air”; it was a fact as heavy as her heart.

O God! Had she not given him her body, soul, and spirit in unimaginable surrender? And though there

had been a gulf between them—his fault, his—his cruelty, his hardness, his lack of mercy, and his lack of love, yet, had she not come back in that brief parting in an agony of new surrender, taking the blame for the coldness, asking forgiveness for the gulf, as though the fault were hers? And this was his remembrance!

“Just a hurried line to follow”—a list of practical requests. Where were the words, the love-words, the life-words, that nature, that soul demanded? Ah! they were under Mistress Pinkham’s shawl, in the pine box in the corner. And this hurried line was following them, not the parting words, as Elizabeth thought. David Dearford, having written from a full, strong heart, deeply stirred, a letter into which, by a fine instinct, the practical



items could not intrude, followed that letter quickly by another where the necessary attention to detail had its scope. Like David, he gave himself with concentration to the subject-matter in hand. He had written his letter of love; now he was writing his letter of affairs. But this, Elizabeth did not know.


Nature is the interpreter of the heart, not a messenger to it. Elizabeth sat amidst the living bloom of summer and it might have been dead winter. As she had walked through the woods with the unread letter in her bosom, the fragrance of the flowers, the song of the birds, the azure of the sky, had seemed the expression of her own heart. She had been glad in summer. Now, she saw it not. She saw only the face of David, sitting in

the seat of the deacons, relentless, remote; saw his set face as he had argued with her, as he had stood the morning he had told her what he believed to be his duty. Her own face became as set as his had been, and all her body matched her face. She rose stiffly from under the spreading pine-tree. With slow feet she walked home, unheeding the summer-crowned way. Her favourite hollyhocks were in lavish splendour of bloom; they stood on either side the gate, and turned toward her as a child might turn, demanding attention. They might have been stacked sticks for all she cared. Miranda, who saw her come in, wondered what new tragedy had happened to her master, but she forbore to ask. There was that in Elizabeth's eyes which daunted even Miranda's curiosity.

Elizabeth went to her room, closed the door, locked it; then she unlocked the little spindle-legged desk in the corner, and took out some sheets of paper well covered and unfolded.

After David had left her, a passionate penitence for those days of withdrawal had possessed her; it would not be silent.

The first expression, out of the abundance of her heart, she had written the night after David left. She had handed it to Eliza Pinkham with her own hand. But the full heart still had to speak, and she had written, from day to day, a journal letter which was to be sent all together after David's first letter should be received. She turned over the passion-touched leaves with quick impatience; sentences leaped out from the paper to meet her eye:



“ You were right, David. You could have done nothing else but your duty as you saw it. It was hard, but I love you the more that you could do it. . . . Forgive my resentment—my coldness—my cruelty; it has passed—passed—swallowed up in love—love—love. . . . It was all so unreasonable—so foolish of me. I did not think with wisdom nor see clearly. I did my duty to protest against, you did your duty to advocate, the dogmas of the Church to which we belonged. But all that had nothing to do—should have had nothing to do—with the personal bond between us. Love cannot be touched by intellectual differences; it is beyond—above them all—supreme—immortal; I see it all so differently now. In the poignant ache of these days, there is nothing present

but our love, and the dull pang of remorse that I wasted a moment of life. . . . The fault was mine—mine, Beloved—all mine! ”

Elizabeth tore these pages into shreds, stooped to the fireplace, and consumed them into ashes. Then she sat down at her desk.

Unlike the Laodiceans, Elizabeth was ever very hot or very cold. She wrote a letter as impersonal as the other had been impassioned—a letter of formal courtesy, chilly, remote; sharp thrusts politely veiled; objective reflections carrying subtle stings; a note of attitude struck; the assumption of the conventional formula of married life, and an implied forgetfulness of that last moment which was in reality the insistent antiphonal of her memory.

There is no excuse for Elizabeth—

none. She had been at fault before,—she admitted it,—and now she is at fault again. There are women who take events and disappointments without question; discipline without murmur; tradition without thought; love without doubt; who are untouched by pride; untroubled by temper. Very comfortable, these women, to themselves and to others. If Elizabeth had been as they are, there would have been no difficulty for herself or for David, her husband; all would have been simple, explained, and readily adjusted.

Yes, and if fire were water, we could bathe therein; but wherewith, then, should we warm ourselves?

IX

HER LETTER

DAVID sat beside the river; he held Elizabeth's letter in his hand. Over there, amid the tents in the field, were too many careless eyes for him to read it as he wished. Like Elizabeth, he, too, went apart for his feast—the bread and wine of life.

The river ran like a blue thread through the grass, reflecting the sky; wild flowers made brilliant touches of colour in the carpet of fresh green; great trees bent their long branches in swaying grace over the water; a bird sang on a bough above him.

Some of the inherited tendencies in David were beginning to snap. Something of the inner natural man was getting free; it welled to his face. Her first letter! He had waited for it many days. He was learning her; he was learning himself. Those last six weeks in Sutton—those weeks of death in life—had taught him much. The strong, reserved man had taken into his life warmth, sunshine, colour, when he had married Elizabeth; taken it into his life, and then taken it for granted, as men are apt to do, in the pressing daily onrush of duties and events.

David was made of the stuff that statesmen are made of; he believed man's active duty is to the State. He was also a Puritan: he believed man's active duty is to the Church. Two

vast obligations, taking time — and there are only twenty-four hours in the day! Women must be more or less incidental. Elizabeth had shone and glowed beside him as he worked, bidding her time. When that crisis came, when the light went out, the heat grew cold, he had felt like a stranger unto himself. A native of the Arctic zone, doubtless, suffers as much from cold as another if he goes suddenly back to his native place after having lived for years in the tropics—perhaps he suffers more. David felt the icy zone that Elizabeth had brought into their life perhaps more than a warmer temperament would have done. But, on that night of parting, in that hour of farewell, the sun had shone again, and it was springtime. He received with thanksgiving the resurrection of what

he had taken as a matter of course, until it went.

And here was her letter — the aftermath of that moment of rebirth! The measure of his gladness was the measure of his growth.

David opened his letter. He read it three times. There must be some mistake. What did it mean? What could it portend? There, again, was the wall of ice, the sharp, freezing points like little cutting icicles on a winter day. Was it possible that, after all, Elizabeth had not forgiven him? There was a keen justice about David, always. His conscience had compelled him to his course, but he had seen Elizabeth's personal point of view all the time. He had striven to make her feel this—striven without avail until that midnight parting.

Then, all was changed; she had murmured his defence and his acquittal as she kissed and clung to him. And, after all, it had been only the moment; it had been an impulse born of fear, of a thousand influences from the tragic event. He was, as yet, unforgiven. He did not blame her; perhaps it was but natural. But he must accept it; he must wait for her outstretched hand, her homing call. Surely, a woman's heart should be her sanctuary—thus argued the baffled man; there should be no violating hands seeking selfish ends; he must not do despite to her manifest purpose, nor strike a counter note to hers still vibrating. He must not fail in reverence. Reverence was one of the keystones of David's character. And then, too, any other course was well-

nigh impossible for him. The more he felt, the more he hid, by habit of reserve—a fatal quality. Of all virtuous qualities there is, at times, none more vicious than reserve; it is a barrier to adjustment—the will of God, the hope of man.

David went back to his tent and wrote to Elizabeth a letter, also of formal courtesy, asking no questions, seeking no reasons for the chill that had fallen upon him like a frost-blight, matching Elizabeth's letter in its tone, the more because his heart awoke and cried against it. What right had he to be selfish, to demand, to desire? Selfishness, demand, desire, he had always told himself, have no part in the life of a Christian philosopher.

X

DOUBT

IN alternation between dull apathy and feverish excitement, the year passed for Elizabeth.

David was in Canada; letters were unfrequent; able letters when they came, but as impersonal as essays. The illogical Elizabeth was surprised at the issues she had aroused. She had builded a wall of ice, and was in wonder at the coldness which confronted her. Womanlike, she searched for other cause in David for the chill that had fallen, for other reasons than the

obvious one that, to a man of his nature, she had made anything else impossible. Pride hurried to the search, spreading batlike wings which made dark shadows, and binding her with stiff bands. She did not see with clear vision; she made no effort to help herself or David; she let things take their course—a fatal error.

Should woman be the one to seek, to find, to woo? she asked herself. No; that was man's prerogative, his obligation in the bond. The year ended, David would come upon his leave of absence, and then——!

The year did end; the men of Sutton began to come home, bringing news of David's valour and of David's promotion to a captaincy; but David came not. Instead, came a letter, and in it this word:

“I have given the matter my most serious thought, my most careful judgment, and I cannot go home just now with a clear conscience. As you know, I re-enlisted some time ago. I have been given a grave and important commission. The men are quitting the army on every hand and going home on every pretext. The generals are sore distressed at this lack of public spirit and patriotism. I understand that General Washington is well-nigh in despair. The letter that he wrote to Congress on the subject is being much discussed. He laments the lack of public spirit, and charges the officers with the lukewarm spirit of the privates, who constantly desert and clamour for a leave of absence every six months. They need some examples. The times are perilous, and

the issue depends upon the *esprit de corps* more than anything else, for our men fight like Ironsides, when they are at it. One cannot blame the poor fellows; many of them are too weak of constitution to stand the hardships; and many of them have left their families in such straits that they are compelled to go home for pecuniary reasons; the pay they receive would not keep a family of red-skins.

“Those of us who are physically strong, as I am, and blessed with this world’s goods in abundance, as the Lord has blessed me, should give the more earnest heed to steadfastness, be willing to forego our own pleasure and self-indulgence for the public good.

“I need not say what this decision has cost me—your own heart will tell

you; but I am clear-sighted in the matter, and I am in duty and honour bound to resign the long-looked-for visit upon the thought of which I have fed these many days.

“It gives me much consolation to know that you are comfortable and safe, and to have the assurance within me which I have that you will meet and comprehend this decision. It is, with me, a matter of conscience.”

Conscience! Elizabeth laid down the letter. Is conscience, then, to be quick on one point only? Has love no place, no right, no claim? Is there but one line of duty? Where was his duty to her, to their love? Doubt—the hovering, haunting demon of Love—stalked into the room and sat beside Elizabeth; she had caught but casual

glimpses of him before; now, he was her guest.

Let be, that word conscience! It was a cloak. David had no desire to return, no need of her. Well, then, let him stay—for ever, if he would.

Elizabeth arose and wrote David his answer; pride guided her quill, and the ink wherewith she wrote was seasoned with wormwood and with gall.

XI

AFTER THE BATTLE

THE fiendish work had waxed since daybreak. Upon the fragrant, blossoming earth had passed the drama of a seething hell; shot had laid waste the fields; a pall of smoke, grim and grey, had eclipsed the sunshine. Blood and powder had changed the wild flowers, fresh at dawn, into a stained and blackened mass. The shrill death-cries of horses, human groans of the dying, and loud appeals to God had rent the air. Men made in the image of their Maker had been trampled into dust. Now, the long shadows of dusk

were falling; the battle was over; the day was won.

David Dearford was crossing the battle-field; triumphant joy marked the remembrance and the foretoken of the victory. But he recoiled with a shudder as he stood still and gazed upon the hideous horror in its ghastly details: charred garments, broken weapons, human fragments, dead and dying, awful in the gathering gloom.

"God! I am thirsty," said a thick voice at David's feet.

David stooped over a mangled human mass. From his canteen he poured some water into the hollow of his hand, and put it to the lips of one who, an hour before, had been an enemy. Who dares now call him enemy, who is going to a common God?

“What may I do for you, my friend?” said David.

“You have killed me; that ’s sufficient, thank you,” replied the thick voice, laconically.

“I killed you? Don’t say that!”

“Don’t say what? Don’t speak the truth? I tell you, things look vastly different when you come to die. You are just one human soul going into the dark alone, and all the ideas and make-believes of other men drop away from you just as the men themselves—my comrades—ran off and left me here to die. O God! I thought I was an atheist, but I ’m not.”

David again stooped toward him, heavy of heart, but the dying man waved him off.

“Go! Go! You killed me, and I was n’t ready to die.”

“Oh, don’t say I killed you!” David reiterated in a strained tone.

“Well, maybe you did n’t actually do it, but you did it all the same, and you ’ll have to answer for it. You ’ll see that, too, when you come to die. It is awful to die! Can you pray?”

David uncovered his head; he tried to pray; his own words seemed so piteously inadequate, he repeated the Lord’s Prayer.

“What a world of liars!” the dying man said hoarsely. “Millions of persons praying every day ‘Thy kingdom come on earth’ while they are doing everything they can to help on the kingdom of the Devil. Just look at this field! God forgive me my part in it—forgive me—as—I—forgive those who—” speech failed him, but he held out his hand to David.

Then came that ominous sound. David saw the end was near; he bathed the damp forehead, moistened the purple lips, and stood watching the battle in which he could take no part—the battle between flesh and spirit. When it was over, and the spirit had outsoared the flesh, David went back to camp. Such sombreness was upon his face that the buoyant Arnold, with whom he was a great favourite, chaffed him.

“But here is something that came by to-night’s post to banish the blue devils, Mr. Sobersides.” Arnold held out a formidable-looking paper. “They have not been left in ignorance of what you have done, you see. Let me congratulate you, Colonel Dearford.”

“Colonel?”

“Yes, man; that is a commission.”

David took it, said a few brief words

of thanks, and walked quietly away, without further speech. The impulsive Arnold, in whom lingered much of the boy, had anticipated the pleasure of his favourite, and was as much disappointed as a youngster would be who had hoped to see a bear-dance, and encountered a funeral. He growled an imprecation on the damned chilliness of the Puritan temperament, but David did not hear him; he was looking into dying eyes and hearing the echo of dying words. He wished the commission had not been sent to him.

Through the long white line of tents walked David to his own. He had been at high tension since dawn; the actual work of muscle and sinew had earned him the boon of sleep. But there was no sleep for him to-night; subtle and strange emotions held him;

a new and convincing sense of the Immensities and the Realities of life encompassed him. Death had been a familiar sight, especially within the year; he had seen many men shot down at his side; he had stood to the front facing bullets, half in love with death in the glow of the moment. But those hours of watching, that vigil with a passing soul, had given him a poignant consciousness of mortality that he had never had before. Life and Death—Death and Life—how common and how vast!

David's days were ever given to active enterprise; there was no time to think beyond the immediate demand of each hurrying moment, and when night came he slept. To-night, he let go his hold on plans of campaign, marches, commissariat, and army de-

tail. When the soul, freed from the interruption of petty and practical claims, is aroused by one of the three great mysteries, it is swept into the infinite Beyond; then, to that mystery which aroused the soul, its kindred mysteries come. And so, to-night, it was with David—contemplating Death, he saw the vision also of Life and Love.

Strange that the new vision of Death brought new vision of Love! Elizabeth stood forth in the semi-darkness against the gleaming white of the tent in all her beauty, her eyes full of unutterable things. As he saw her there, a softening came upon him; a sudden birth of comprehension; a psychic intuition of her—of her nature, so different from his own—of her needs, to which his nature was a stranger. Perhaps, after all, the reverence which had

taken her keynote and held aloof at her behest was not the highest reverence, in that it was a reverence to the expression manifest, instead of a reverence to the eternal verity of love.

Intrusion, presumption, are to be avoided ever with prayer and fasting, so do they contradict chivalry and manly grace. But may not the fear of intrusion lead to the danger of exclusion? May not the fear of presumption prevent the masterful handling of a passing shadow, allowing it thus to become a solid front? May not the fear of intrusion and presumption bind the hands that should unlock the door?

David was learning. In the school of Love he had passed out of the primary grade. He had gone from Arithmetic to the Higher Mathematics; in

his problems he must now assume an unknown quantity.

At sunrise he would write to Elizabeth a letter, not matching hers but making hers; not taking her expressed note, but, with trust and hope, striking his own in truer key. He had a swift clairvoyant conviction that it was, in very truth, hers, also, notwithstanding the chill of her letters.

He rose at sunrise. As he did, Arnold's body-servant lifted the flap of the tent with many apologies. The General had forgotten to give Colonel Dearford another letter which came last night at the same time as the commission. The letter was from Elizabeth. There, in the morning, she stood again, in the sunlight as at midnight, only the sparkle of the newly risen sun shone on her hair, and her

eyes were laughing, not shadowed, as they had been in the darkness.

Alas! This was the letter of worm-wood and of gall that Elizabeth had written in her anger.

David was a righteous, a just man; but he was in all points tempted like other men. This letter, coming as it did at a crucial moment, roused him to anger and to pride. He did not write the letter he had planned; he forbore to write for many days. When he did, the temperature of the letter that he wrote was zero.

XII

HER EXPERIMENT

THE second winter was long and ice-bound. Elizabeth was in sore straits; baffled, hungry, a wild bird in a closed cage; a warm, living creature thrust into cold storage; no comprehending hand reaching to guide her back. The great, awful stars saw her lifted face night after night in quiet unconcern; the grey dawn found her at the window as it came creeping on from over the cold sea. The pines sang *Misereres*. These were her friends; for the rest—she had none, on this side of the ocean; on the other—Ah! a rebirth

of old memories awoke, called. Her brothers wrote, varying the notes on the same tune:

“Come home to us!” “Why should you live in a land of rebels, sweet Bess?” “There, is danger—here, is safety; there, is hatred—here, is affection; there, are enemies—here, are brothers.” “Come home.”

Home—O childhood! O happy, care-free past!

The English letters were Elizabeth’s harbour of refuge in these days.

“It is so long since we have seen you, dear Bess,” one brother wrote. “I have always owed David Dearford a grudge for carrying away, with that surprising suddenness, our brilliant Bess. It is now over two years since

you left us. You were so enamoured with your adopted country that we felt we had lost you, but this cursed war has had one advantage: it has found you your pen. You write more frequently than you did. I was rejoiced to see, lurking between the lines of your last letter, a vague spirit of protest. Mark you, I say between the lines. You are made of plucky stuff and stand by your husband's guns; but, great Jove! how could a Harcott really countenance rebellion and sedition! And to have a loyal heart and be surrounded by sedition and rebellion must be a deucedly uncomfortable position, especially for a woman.

“Do come home, Bess! You will not be deserting your post, nor neglecting your duty. You see I do not forget you are a Puritan for the nonce, and

duty is the fetish of their kind. You cannot do Dearford any good, moping up in that dull town while he amuses himself in camp. It will only be for a visit, and Dearford—if he is worth his salt—will feel much more comfortable about you, if you are here, safe with us. They say the Anglo-Saxon is a cold-blooded animal; but we have our ties, and they pull strong.

“I can see you now, little Bess, riding over the moors, after the hounds, your hair flying in the sun, burnished by its light.

“I can see you now, at the spinnet, with the old crowd around you, singing ‘Heigh-ho for King Charlie!’

“As for thinking of you standing sedately ‘on a narrow neck of land’—between a psalm-singing heaven and a sizzling hell—I have never been able

to limber my unagile mind to the feat. And, even if you do it with your lips—Bess, my girl—I 'll wager you are singing another song in your heart. Come home, and we will sing it together.”

There is much in brotherhood, after all; at least with our kin we speak the same language.

The spring came, fragrant, soothing, redolent of blossom, pregnant with promise. The summer followed, and again the early fall swept in with storms, such storms as Elizabeth had not seen before. The winds blew wild; the very waterspouts of the everlasting deeps seemed opened. In Elizabeth's heart there was a great dearth. Even her books, benign comrades, palled. One wild September day she was listlessly turning the pages of an old

French book; on a sudden, in bold relief, stood out these words:

“Our Ladye of Aquitaine, the most renowned Queen of France—wherein she had done well to abide, in that it is the better country—and afterwards the mighty Queen of Great Britain, the crown of which country she wore to her sorrow and desolation; being also the glorious mother of the great King Richard, who, as he lay in her womb, drew into his own heart the very blood and fibre of the lioness. This most honoured Ladye Paramount in her immortal and far-famed Court of Love hath well declared beyond a peradventure, and to which no man dare say nay, that Marriage and Love cannot abide together; that where the one cometh in the other goeth out. This

is of a very surety of reasoning, and by very proof of the nature of man and woman and of woman and man. For no man wanteth that which he hath, and no woman desireth that which is her own. And there are other and weighty reasons wherefore this unimpeachable decision remaineth true until this day, and must be true for all time to come. As there are, also, many weighty reasons wherefore marriage is to be avoided as both undesirable and unprofitable."

A mad impulse seized Elizabeth; the storm without swept into her soul. It was the deepest lie—these words; the antithesis of all that is; she would challenge David to deny them! He should hear them as her echo and deny them to her face; it would arouse his

cold heart to assert itself; she would break through this chill neutrality; any positive were better than this blank negation, even a positive of keener pain. A breathless eagerness possessed her as she wove the words into a letter, a letter that gave play to the worst within her. She had been reading much of the French satirists of late—not to her profit.

“I was reading to-day, dear David,” she wrote, “and I found in an old French book this extract, which I have translated, and enclose. It may interest you to see it. How quick the French are to seize the salient points of human nature! How they know life on its every side; every side except one; their subtlest imagination could not invent even for dramatic foil a

New England winter among New England men and New England women. In very truth I find it difficult to believe myself that I am living it; I often think it a strange dream. There is a tide of French blood in me, you know, southern French, the most dangerous of tides, I presume you think. You remember?—my maternal grandmother was a Frenchwoman. And—tell it not in Gath—she was also a Roman Catholic. I keep that solemn secret closely guarded from Miranda lest she should feel it very meet, right, and her bounden duty to fire the house while I slept, and that would be a pity; it is a pretty house, as New England houses go, and it would be a loss to you. It would be most uneconomical to make you pay for Miranda's religious zeal. However, I do not think

I could be much more formidable to her or to the Sutton community than I am at present; to them, I am the Woman clothed in Scarlet, which is a great mistake, for I have not worn red since I left England, only ugly greys and browns.

“Is it my French blood that has impelled me to send the enclosed extract? Or is it the profundity of its truth? I await your verdict.

“Adieu,

“ELIZABETH.”

XIII

HIS REPLY

THE letter despatched, the most unreasonable Elizabeth waited—her thoughts like a seething sea. How would David answer? Would he be angry and reprove her? Ah! A sharp scolding would bring a snap into the lifeless air. Would he blame her with serious admonition? If he but would, then she could defend herself and cry out her cause. Would he take it as her word to him, and would his heart at last assert itself above the measured method? Then, her doubt, her pride would be satisfied, and she could com-

fort and solace him. The answer came. Elizabeth broke the seal, and read:

“NORTHERN NEW YORK, Sept. —, 1777.

“MY DEAR ELIZABETH:

“There is a temporary lull in action just now; there is breathing space and a moment to catch the glory of the autumn coming in yellow and golden splendour, with a sweep of winds like epic poetry. For the first time in many weeks I have time to ‘read, mark, and inwardly digest’ my mail; heretofore it has been swallowed on the march or snatched between scenes which are not for your ears; scenes that are potent in significance but not pleasant in detail. Therefore, I was glad that the last mail brought a letter from your facile and elegant pen.

“Thank you for the extract, and for

translating it. To my misfortune, not having had a French grandmother, and having received my education in a crude and unc cosmopolitan country, I could not have read the original. I know French literature tolerably well, however, in a makeshift way, through translations. You are quite right; the French mind has a surprising quickness for seizing the salient points of life—I should not say all of them; and they know human nature; but I should fancy they know it as the bird knows the earth, in flying over its surface, rather than as the beaver delving into its depths. Some of us must be beavers and some are winged birds. If natural history were limited to the one, how could you have decked your hat with that long, drooping white plume you wore in England—that

plume which was always between my eyes and your face? And, if it were limited to the other, what would you do for your much fancied furs?

“This extract has the flavour strong of the time to which it refers—the most incomprehensible, the most inscrutable time in history; the age which gave birth to the Crusades; when men fought for a sepulchre rather than for a living issue; when men took arms to win a Golgotha rather than to guard a vital principle.

“As to the especial point involved, Marriage—that is a problem as old as Adam and Eve; but your author precludes discussion, in that he asserts a decision. Who would take issue with a woman? Are not women criterions in these matters? And the renowned Eleanor of Aquitaine, having had two

royal husbands, and, as history asserts, numberless paramours, must have been an undoubted authority on the subject.

“As for the other and weighty reasons why marriage and love cannot exist together, and why marriage is undesirable and unprofitable, your author falls into the trick of the pettifogger in that he generalises *ad libitum*, and draws conclusions from his own generalisations. The learned and approved Bacon has given us one weighty reason why marriage is undesirable; he says, ‘it is an impediment to great enterprise’; but, on the other hand, your comprehensive Shakespeare suggests the direct opposite of this conclusion in numberless instances; for example, if it had not been for his wife, the enterprising Macbeth would have remained but Thane of Cawdor.

“There are as many points of view as there are points of the compass. I am finding that out more and more in this close contact with many men of many minds. But, whether marriage is an impediment to enterprise or otherwise concerneth not us. With us the issue is past; what God hath joined together man cannot put asunder.

“We are waiting developments here with ready hearts and hands, not knowing what a day may bring forth. Burgoyne is moving down from the north. He has his ammunition stored on a small island called Diamond Island, in Lake George, that most beautiful of lakes just above here. There was a sharp skirmish there last week. It did not get into the reports; it was but a wretched petty defeat; one's pride can stand defeat in a well-fought battle;

but it is not stimulating to the imagination to have a handful of men drive us by their fire into skulking in a bay for several hours. Though it was a petty failure, it would have been a signal success, for, as I said, Burgoyne has his ammunition stored there, and it would have given us the key to the situation.

“If Clinton, who is coming up from the south, succeeds in reaching Burgoyne, we shall be sore beset.

“I hope your health prospers; you do not speak of it; please report to me when you write again.

“Faithfully,

“Your husband,

“DAVID.”


This! Elizabeth had expected anything but this. Reproof, protest, a

plea from his heart—anything but this quiet handling of her passionate experiment. Did he not see—did he not understand what led her on—what drove her on to send him that infamous denial of the highest truth? Why did he not contradict it, deny it, disprove it? As he did not, it could mean but one thing—*agreement*. David's mind was alert, always; he could handle a question with rapier-like keenness in discussion in the intellectual realm, but he never stooped to play with life; he would not stand upon the threshold of love and tilt lances. She had done it—yes! but that was different. There were many Elizabeths. It was one Elizabeth who had sent the letter; it was another Elizabeth who read the answer. And there was but one David, the man whose yea was yea,

whose nay was nay; the Puritan, straightforward, simple, direct, not the man of the larger sphere whose language was made to conceal thought; thus she argued, forgetting the one did not contradict the other; forgetting, as well, that she had always avowed the time would come when the bands which bound him, wrapped around him in his infancy, would be outgrown, and the vital man underneath would approve himself. She judged his letter by his own past; measured it by the habit of his mind, which she had been waiting for him to outgrow; the habit of uncompromising nakedness of speech and act for which the New England type was conspicuous. This, she did—O inconsistency of woman!—despite the fact she had often urged with flaming argument that the powerful men

of the world are not of arbitrary type; that forceful manhood must be larger than conditions; that what seems to localise a man is but one phase of his development, to be outgrown and left behind. Like other prophets she forgot her prophecy. Like other women, her passion-cry stifled her logic. That the blade had grown into the ear and was growing into the full corn seemed impossible to her who had often cited the analogy. The possibility of David's matching her mettle and crossing lances never occurred to her. His letter could mean but one thing. *He agreed with the words*; marriage and love could not live together; he no longer loved her; so she lashed herself. Something wild awoke within her.

"Miranda!" she called, "Miranda, I am going to England."



“TO ENGLAND?”

“Yes. I want you to help me pack, please. I wish nothing said about it. I want no good-byes, and no fuss. I do not know how long I shall stay.”

Elizabeth sat down to write to David her decision and her good-bye. Not here—not in these rooms haunted by his presence could she write it. There would be days of waiting in Boston; let the letter go from there.

XIV

FREE

ALL was in readiness. The packet was to sail upon the morrow. Elizabeth sat in the stuffy sitting-room of the Boston tavern to write her good-bye to David—the most difficult crux of this difficult ordeal.


The long stage-coach drive had been like a vague dream, haunted by memories, nervous apprehension, thrust sometimes by sharp questions. The few days' stay in Boston had been feverishly active. Now the pause, the inevitable letter, which must be written.

The room was warm and unventilated. On the hearth were burnt-out ashes; an occasional wind down the chimney blew them about the room; a fine grey dust was upon the tables and chairs; the small windows were barred; bands of shadow fell upon the table at which she sat to write.


Elizabeth was a creature of light and air. Let her but breathe deeply for a moment, she would be stronger for her task; she was wont to draw her energies from elemental sources. The fresh air! She must have it! She pushed away the blank paper before which she had been sitting, threw down the quill, and started for a brisk walk. Instinctively, she turned to the dock. There lay the packet; all was bustle and stir; men were loading and cleaning, preparatory to the morrow. She

walked along the wharf; she found an unfrequented place. Then she turned from the town and looked toward the east; her garments were blown back in wide folds by the strong wind that swept landward. She stood very still, gazing on the harbour with deepening eyes. Beyond the harbour—the sea! the unplumbed, the inexorable sea! She was to put it between herself and David—she was to go alone upon this measureless deep. Memory, sharp as the salt sea, gripped her. That long wedding journey! What days of rapturous delight upon that great immensity! The sea had sparkled and glistened in the sunlight—swept high with mysterious shadow in the night-time! For six weeks, it had held her by a charmed power which was not of heaven nor of earth! Fatigue!—

discomfort—danger? Others had felt them; she had not felt them. She had been as one disembodied in a larger place, setting forth to try the untried; to know the unknown. O days of rejoicing and of freedom! David had loved her then; had given her homage worthy love. That had brought the rejoicing, the glad winged sense her spirit had known. Love is the great emancipator. But—wait—what are those words? “He that *loveth* flieth, runneth and rejoiceth; he is free and is not bound.” He that *loveth*—not he who is loved. It is the *loving* that dowers life with rejoicing, with freedom—the winged heart, the unbound liberty of spirit! Not the being loved. Swiftly, new thoughts begin to stir, to flock like soaring birds. Surely, it is more glorious to give than to receive;



that is life's great beatitude, proved in all spiritual things, and proved practically with a conscious proof beyond all argument, even in the tiniest tokens of every day. As a girl, how she had scorned the girl who was always taking from others and tying her own allowance in her purse with a hard knot! How she had denounced the men who would not give in charity save where they could look for large returns! She had called them niggards. If this were true of those who measured dross, what word could fit the soul that measured gifts of love? Had she, then, been a niggard in love, a miser, a mean measurer, an exact accountant? Had she failed herself in the very standard she had set for David? Had she withheld—doubting? Had she denied—measuring? Given what she received, no



more, returning pound for pound? Piti-
able poverty of spirit that limits one's
giving by a tape measure and weighs
one's gifts in a scale! Better to be a
prodigal, a spendthrift, a generous giver,
so that one's own soul expands, grows,
enlarges, breaks the constraining bands
of selfishness—that sin of sins.

For the petty, pettiness; for the
small, smallness; for the ignoble, doubt;
but let love, if it be love, fulfil the ob-
ligation of its own nobility, without
thought of measure or of return.

On the sudden, the bands of doubt
and of pride which had held Elizabeth
for two years in stiff bondage were
snapped in twain. Her soul rose to
its full stature, unhampered, unbound.
And she was free.

Freedom is a vibrating force. Its

vibrations circle, even to detail of outward manifestation. The bondman skulks, walks with bowed head; the emancipated holds his head erect. Bondage of any kind begets a hampering restraint and hesitancy of action. A swift setting free begets the reverse. Bound by her pride, her fear, her doubt, Elizabeth had longed to hide in her old safe home. Free—she felt equipped to move the world, to brave the elements, to challenge danger, to fulfil the undefined.

“It is I who have failed,” she said. “O David, I must, I *will* see you and ask you to forgive me.”

Then Elizabeth turned her back upon the packet, the sea, and Boston town—and started for the American camp.

XV

IN THE FOREST

"CAN we not push on farther to-night, sir?" Elizabeth turned persuasive eyes to the rough figure beside her in the gig.

"Better not. This is the last tavern," the man said.

"Oh! Can't we go on—please, Mr. Simpkins."

The man had a rough figure, but it was a kind heart that looked out of the light blue eyes.

Elizabeth had taken the stage-coach from Boston to the terminus of the stage road; and then, after due outlay

of money and investigation, had become possessed of Josiah Simpkins and his gig for the rest of the journey.

She was nearing the end, the goal of her desire—David!

Every mile brought her fresh joy, fresh impatience.

Josiah Simpkins was having the fat of his experience—gold, importance, talk!—the climax of the three to him; and all just because a foolish woman had taken it into her pretty head to see her husband and must have her way. It was a mad prank, he thought, for a youngish woman with gold in her pocket and gold in her hair to go galivanting over untried country roads; and Josiah Simpkins had his secret opinion that when the husband saw her, he would give scant thanks for her trouble, and would wish her the other

side of Jordan; but if she would she would; and it was a harvest for him, Josiah Simpkins—like a wheat crop in famine time. He found himself watching for the questions in her soft, low voice as he had watched for birds in the woods; and, with Yankee shrewdness, he found himself preparing the answers to the questions before she asked them.

She was no fool like other women; she knew a thing or two and wanted to know a thing or two more about the country through which she was passing. But this last question had brought a shade upon his humour. He did not want to refuse her, and he knew her request was sheer folly. The inflexible Josiah Simpkins said to himself that he felt like a bin with the pins out when she turned those eyes on him and

called him "sir" in that sweet voice. It made him think of the brook and the wind in the trees mixed up together.

"It is only three o'clock now. How much difference will it make if we go on to-night?" Elizabeth said. "We shall have nearly four hours of light."

"Well, ma'am, four at one end's four at the other; we'll get to the camp in the afternoon instead of at sundown, if we go on. But there ain't any tavern between here and there to spend the night, so we'd better stop in this settlement."

"Are there no farmhouses?"

"Maybe there is and maybe there is n't. I've forgot. There's no booked places, anyway, for folks to stop—except——"

"Well, except——"

Josiah looked first over one shoulder,

then over the other; there was a curious expression in his eyes. "Except old Mother Matthison. She takes travellers sometimes. That's well on the way in New York State."

Elizabeth's eyes brightened. "So near the camp! Of course we will go on and stop there."

"No, ma'am; you don't want to go there."

"Why not?"

"Because."

"Is there anything wrong? Is she honest and all right?"

"Oh, yes! Honest and all right, I suppose."

"Then why not?"

"Because."

"Pardon me, Mr. Simpkins, but, really, that is not a very conclusive reason."

"You'd be afraid!"

"Afraid! Of what?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"No, I am not afraid; and then I shall have you."

This was the last straw. Josiah's chest expanded under his plaid waistcoat; he threw his common sense to the winds.

"All right. We'll go on. G'lang, Snaily!"

"Mr. Simpkins," Elizabeth said, "why do you call that nice horse 'Snail'? I am sure he is n't slow."

Josiah winked one of his bright blue eyes with emphasis and chuckled. "Don't you know," he said, "if you want folks to think a thing, you must say the opposite. Now, if I called that horse 'Lightning' you'd be saying, 'Lightning's too fast a name for this

horse, Mr. Simpkins; he ain't a fast horse.' But if you set out expecting him slow, when I call him Snail, you say, 'Why, he ain't slow.' "

Elizabeth smiled. "What philosophy!"

"Is philosophy and common sense the same thing?"

"Your kind of philosophy is."

"Well, I would n't give a brass farthing for any other kind of philosophy than mine, if it ain't. G'lang, Snail!"

The next two hours were the fairest of Josiah Simpkins's life. Elizabeth felt a real gratitude and a real trust in this rustic bumpkin-knight of hers, and her spirits were rising that the end was near—the long journey, the two years' exile!

As the shadows lengthened in the late afternoon, her spirits flagged a trifle.

Josiah was absorbed in the roughness of the road, so talk grew less; a quiet fell on both. The gig jogged on its way.

“There’s Mother Matthison’s.”

Elizabeth was not quite sure whether it was the suddenness or the tone of the statement that chilled her.

“What a picturesque place,” she said, to reassure herself.

There was a clearing, around which the pines stood tall and solemn—a dark semicircle. In the centre was a long, low house built of logs. A rough barn stood behind the house. There was a tangled wildness and confusion of growth which contrasted strangely with the New England farms, even in remote places.

Though one cannot see the impress of footprints or the absence of them,

there is a familiar look about a porch or doorstep where feet often tread — an expression of hospitality which the trained eye detects.

The door and the little open porch of Mother Matthison's house had a look that was the very opposite of this. At the right of the house, close beside it, as if to get under its shadow, was a mound, long and straight. In all the tangled confusion of the place, that was the one spot that showed a touch of order; there the grass had been cut with scrupulous care. Josiah Simpkins gave a sharp call. The door opened. A tall, lean woman, with iron-grey hair and haunted eyes, came out upon the porch; she started when she saw Elizabeth.

“Say, Mother Matthison, can you take a passenger for the night?”

"I guess so," the woman answered, and led the way into the house.

Elizabeth followed. Josiah was very hungry, but he measured his horse's hunger by his own, and went to the barn.

As Elizabeth entered the house again she felt that curious shiver; but in the simple homeliness of the interior and the care of her hostess it passed.

"There's a room all ready," the woman said, "if you're in a hurry. It's the room I give to travellers who pass this way, but——" She looked intently at Elizabeth, "if you're not averse to waiting, I'll give *you* a better room after supper; I'll fix it for you. I would n't give it to any one else."

"Thank you, madam. If you will let me have some fresh, cool water at once, I do not care when I have my room."

There was no opportunity for Eliza-



beth to speak further with the woman; she was evidently maid-of-all-work. Elizabeth heard her bustling in the bedroom and stirring in the kitchen alternately. Elizabeth, as she sat by the fire that Mother Matthison had lighted for her, and heard the coming and going of the busy feet and looked about the simple room, arraigned herself for vagaries; and when supper was ready and the sturdy form of Josiah Simpkins came in, she concluded she had had a happy escape from the noisy tavern of the last village. Here, at least, was no tap-room.

It was an excellent plain supper, and passed, on the whole, cheerfully, until toward the end; then a trifling incident occurred—trifling at the time, but not trifling when Elizabeth remembered it in the watches of the night.

The conversation had been pleasant, the woman had seemed interested in Elizabeth's journey, and she talked not without intelligence of the small happenings of her own neighbourhood. She seemed to like Josiah Simpkins, who had a kindly word for her, although Elizabeth had an instinct that the words were not born without effort. The hospitable fire snapped, sparkled, blazed, and waxed hot. Josiah bore it as long as he could for Elizabeth's sake; he felt a restraining influence in her atmosphere; finally he could bear it no longer.

"You must excuse me, ladies, if I take off my coat," he said, rising.

The kitchen, where they were eating supper, was not plastered, and in one corner was an upright holding a cross-beam on which the low roof rested. It

jutted out, as do the short timbers of an unfinished joining. Josiah took off his coat and, reaching up, hung it on the beam.

A sound, the mingling of a sob and groan, rang shrill. Mother Matthison stood straight and rigid, covering her eyes with one hand and holding out the other with a gesture of both menace and appeal. Elizabeth and Josiah looked at her and then at each other.

"For the love of God Almighty, take *that thing* down," the hoarse voice cried.

Josiah sprang forward, hands and wit ready. "There—it's down, on the floor. I can never get up if I try—me or my coat—we always have to come back to the soil."


Mother Matthison regained her com-

posure. She laughed nervously, as she turned apologetically to Elizabeth.

"I'm an old fool, but you get nervous living alone. I saw a—I heard a—I read a story once," she concluded hurriedly, "and I can't forget it."

The woman led Elizabeth to her room; she placed the candle on the table, looked lingeringly around, paused a moment as if about to speak, then, saying an abrupt good-night, left the room. Elizabeth was very tired, the bed was comfortable, she slept profoundly—how long, she did not know.

"Elizabeth—" Elizabeth sat up in bed, vividly, keenly, widely awake. The room was absolutely dark; the candle had burned out, so it must be nearly morning, or—had it been put out? She had no hesitating wonder as to where she was. In swift pictures,



outlined upon the darkness, she relived each impression: the dark pines around the house (they must be black now), the long, straight mound, the beam with Josiah's coat upon it, the look in Mother Matthison's eyes. There was no sound; stillness everywhere. For the first time in her life, Elizabeth was in the bondage of fear.

"I was dreaming," she said, "but it was very ghostly; it sounded as if some one called me by my name. I will get up and find a light."

But she *could not get up*. She could not bring herself to put her feet out into that mysterious darkness. She argued, scolded herself into a braver mood; she had reached the point where she had resolved to lie down and try to sleep again, to be ready for the morning—when—

“Elizabeth!” Once more the voice froze her blood. It seemed to come from a long distance. It seemed to hold in its echo agony, despair, entreaty, appeal.

She almost ceased to breathe; her heart stopped. She had smiled when Josiah had told her she would be afraid. Nor would she be afraid of anything she could *see*! But this! If it came again she could not bear it. It came again—with a ghostly emphasis of lingering, piercing soul and marrow—that disembodied voice: “Elizabeth!”

Elizabeth Dearford was vigorous, but she mercifully fainted then. When consciousness returned, the light of dawn glimmered through the open window. Elizabeth felt herself too clear of head for tricks of fancy. It

had been no dream, no imagining. She had never believed in ghosts; but only a stupid mind would accept a finality of unbelief on any subject. Experience was more than argument. She had heard a voice; she had been called three times by name. Something had happened to David!

Her white face brought kind solicitations from her hostess and eager haste on the part of Josiah to be off. He helped the drooping form into the gig and saw the ashen face with concern; he said very unpuritanical words to himself, in the depths of his bushy beard, for having let this pretty creature have her own way.

“David is dead—David is dead—” The wheels of the gig revolved to this refrain.

“Do you mind if I talk, ma’am?”

Josiah said at last. "I see you 're down-hearted, but I *must* talk."

"No," Elizabeth answered, languidly.

"Shivery place to stay in, ain't it, ma'am? Did you see that grave? She cuts the grass herself *with the scissors*, they say."

"Whose is it?" Elizabeth asked indifferently.

"Her daughter's; and nobody else would touch it for a fortune, because, you know,"—he lowered his voice as if the trees had ears,—“the girl got lonely off here, I guess, and took the devil's way out. That's the reason I did n't want to take you there. The place is haunted. I'd as soon sleep in hell as in that house. I don't mind sleeping in the barn, and there's where I did sleep. I never go there anyhow,

these days, unless I'm dead obliged to."

"Why?"

"Why? Because them that die before the Lord wills them to ain't either living or dead. Her body's in that grave—it's a blank shame that grave is there; it ought to be out at the cross-roads; it curses the house—but her spirit can't leave it, nor yet stay in it."

Oh, the tragedy of life! Elizabeth's thoughts were with David, but she must show a human interest in this human story.

"Did you ever see the daughter?"

"Why, bless you, yes! She was a pretty child. It used to be the best stopping-place in her day, fifteen years ago; she made things lively when she grew up."

"What was her name?" still indiffer-

ently; her thoughts were aching—
David—David!


“Elizabeth.”

“ELIZABETH?”

“Yes. And the woman cries it out sometimes in the night, when she’s been set thinking. I heard her once. It’s an awful sound. She gets up and goes out to the grave and calls her girl. I was afraid we’d hear her last night after that unlucky slip of mine, but I was so tired I would n’t have heard the last trump; and I guess you were, too. Say, I was terrible sorry about that coat last night. I clean forgot she hung herself.”

“Oh!” Elizabeth’s voice broke.

Josiah felt that he had been criminally heartless to add details to Elizabeth’s gloom, but he simply could not resist it. To his great surprise, how-



ever, the colour came back to Elizabeth's cheeks and to her lips; soon the smiles were there, and questions of the trees—the country. Surely the ways of women are passing strange.

Josiah pulled a halt beside a stream, crystal, rushing. Swaying trees made organ music.

“Now, ma'am, for our dinner—you and me and Snail.”

For the “you” Elizabeth's protest was ready; the “me and Snail” silenced it.

“You won't mind, ma'am, if I give Snaily his first, 'cause he's got the work to do.”

“Oh, no!” Elizabeth sat down on a fallen tree; she drew in the tonic of the air, which to-day was soft and warm, an aftermath of summer.

"Why, Mr. Simpkins! What *are* you doing?"

Josiah gave his emphatic wink.


"Just wait," he said. He was standing before the horse, dangling two bags of oats. The horse was contemplating him with blinking expectancy. Josiah was keeping up a rumbling monotone:

"Here, Snaily! Here's your dinner. Good horse! Nice old fellow! Here, Billy! Nice old horse! Here's your dinner! Now, Snaily, now Billy, here you go!"

He tied one of the bags on Snail's head and backed away from him with the other bag, saying:

"Now, Billy! Here you are, Billy! Good horse, Billy," until he was out of the range of Snail's vision; then he threw the bag on the ground.

"Now I'll answer your question, ma'am." He stood scratching his



sandy head. "That horse is dead lonely, ma'am. I know it. I've watched him. It's awful lonely for a fellow to go day after day through these woods never seeing no one. It's not lonely for you nor for me, for we've got our think; but a horse can't think, so they say, and I never see what's to keep 'em from getting down-hearted. They can't pray and they can't think and they can't talk. These woods are terrible lonely; there ain't no travel here. Now, you see, if Snaily feels there's a friend around the corner, even if he don't see him, he's a lot cheered; he kind of perks himself up to be ready for Billy. Did n't you hear him neigh a while ago? You thought he was neighing for his dinner; well, now, he was n't; he was neighing for Billy."

The sumptuous meal of cold ham

and brown bread was spread upon the fallen tree; the crystal water filled emerald beakers of large, shining leaves, made by Josiah, as a woodman knows. On his own side of the leafy banquetting table, Josiah produced an ugly black bottle. He raised it with awkward gesture.

“According to St. Paul, ma’am, with your permission.”

“St. Paul?” Elizabeth questioned.

“Yes. For my stomach’s sake.”

Between his mouthfuls Josiah made queer little noises that brought the birds and living things of the forest to share their feast.

“Sit still, ma’am,” he said, “and don’t speak, and they’ll have no fear. The creatures that don’t know man ain’t afraid. Fear ain’t natural, by the will of God.”

Josiah broke bread; the birds ate it out of his hand; the squirrels, the hares, and the little chipmunks gathered about him as about one of their own kin.

"In England," Elizabeth said, "the birds were my friends."

"In England! Thunder and lightning! You don't mean to say that I've got a live Tory on my hands!"

"Don't be afraid, Mr. Simpkins"—Elizabeth's eyes were bright with mischief; "'fear is n't natural, by the will of God.'"

"A Tory! Josiah Simpkins taking a live Tory through the forest! Well—I vow!"

"What is a Tory, Mr. Simpkins?"

"Excuse me, ma'am; it's not for polite ears to hear."

"And your tongue, Mr. Simpkins?"

"Can't help it, ma'am. My mother,

she always said, 'Now, Joe, mind your manners—be polite'; but, you see, there's some things that's stronger than manners, and Tories is one of them."

Josiah pulled his unkempt, sandy beard, puzzled. After a moment's grave consideration of an evident problem, he continued:

"How long have you been in this country?"

"Three years."

"Well, now, three years rubs off the dust; being married to an American rubs in the leaven! I guess you'll do."

Josiah drew a long breath of relief.

"Thank you. So will you." Elizabeth smiled.

"Well—that's handsome, considering."

"Oh, I am used to being abused;

and I know you did not really mean anything personal."

Silence—awkward for Josiah, retrospective for Elizabeth—fell for a moment.

"My lot has not been easy lately," Elizabeth said, thinking aloud, a faint veil of mist over the deep eyes, a tremour in the clear voice.

This was too much for Josiah; his heart beat fast.

"Look a' here, ma'am, you can be a Tory; you can be the daughter of King George himself, an' it don't make no difference. You're yourself; and if you're a Tory—well, then, I just did n't know all about Tories before; so that's all there is about it."

Elizabeth held out her hand. Josiah took it with grave and awkward reverence; he looked at it.

"It seems like as if I ought to give it a bit of bread; it's for all the world like a little white bird."

They gathered up the fragments of the feast and spread them for the birds. Seated in the gig, Josiah took up the reins; a long-drawn-out neigh at Elizabeth's side made her start; had she not been near Josiah she would have been convinced a horse was hidden among the trees. Snail answered—a prompt, hearty response, and started off in quick gallop.

"Now he's all right; he thinks Billy is behind. You see, it's the same with us; we keep up our spirits thinking things are just around the corner, or coming after us."

Elizabeth's eyes shone with amusement.

"You were talking about the virtue

of truth this morning, Mr. Simpkins. Does n't your conscience prick for deceiving poor Snaily?"

"Of course not; it's the Gospel truth. There are Billies behind—hundreds of 'em. Boston's full of Billies and Worcester's full of Billies, and there's lots on the way; so it's only a matter of making your mind's eye go a little farther back to hitch on."

Whether it was the bag of oats or the sense of Billy's unseen presence, Snail made better time the next two hours. Again Josiah pulled a halt.

"Now, ma'am, you can save four miles by taking a short cut through these woods. The waggon road goes the long way round. On the other side of the woods lives Farmer Dowd; when you get there, you're all right. He'll take care of you and see you to

the army, they're camped near his house. There's no danger, I know these woods; there are no Indians, it's safe as safe; much safer than taking the waggon road, for that skirts mighty near the British lines. I guess my task is about done, unless you're afraid to go alone."

Elizabeth assured him she had no fear; she bade him good-bye with real regret. When the way is difficult in life, a chance companion, even a rough one, becomes a friend.

"Right straight ahead for half a mile," Josiah called, "and then you'll find your husband. Good luck to you both."

Alone in the woods, dark fears like croaking crows hovered. Courage! her delight is near—David! The great pines soughed and swayed long, som-

brous branches in the wind; the russet oaks, the gold and flaming maples, rustled and sang; the bracing air was tonic clear; the elixir got into her blood; a renewal of life seemed granted her. Skinners—savages—Miss McCrea—Mother Matthison—that lonely grave—the voice in the night—yes, the thoughts pierced, one after the other, made her veins cold for a moment—then fled; nothing must live but delight in these beautiful flaming northern woods; and—David was beyond.

“Stop!” The word seemed to come out of the crystal air. In her path stood two scarlet-coated men, demanding her destination and her purpose. For a moment she hesitated, then simply, frankly gave them the truth. “I am on my way to the American

camp, which is not many miles from here, I believe."

One of the men laughed a loud laugh. "Doubtless you have your own innocent purposes, but our Colonel must determine that they interfere with none of his.

"Is he near?"

"Yes. Sir James Trenholm is our Colonel; he is in charge of a battalion—over there, beyond the woods."

"Take me to him, and at once!" Elizabeth's bearing was imperious; her tone had a ring of vindication in it; but women's voices had had that ring in them before; it were better to let the Colonel decide.

XVI

SIR JAMES TRENHOLM

SIR JAMES TRENHOLM bowed to Elizabeth with propitiating grace. It was, in England, the age of elaborate manners.

“My fair lady, this is a happy chance that brings you to our camp; in what way may we serve you?”

Instead of the awed and bashful country-bred which Sir James expected from the sample of her gown, his “fair lady” proved more fitting than he thought. With quiet dignity her eyes met his; nor was she dazzled by his scarlet and his lace.

"I believe, sir, that you are in command. I crave permission to pass your lines."

Great heavens! What eyes—what curves—what white flesh! He had casually glanced at her before; now he saw her. What an air she had! Where found she it in this cursed wilderness?

"May I presume to question," he asked, "why you desire to pass the lines? The enemy is beyond."

"Your enemy is my friend," she answered; "but"—and she smiled—"I will be your friend if you will help me reach your enemy."

This was nonchalance attractive.

"And do you seek your father?"

"My husband." Elizabeth said it as she might have said, "My King."

"Good Lord!"

“I shall be very grateful, sir, if you will let me pass.”

“Good Lord!”

Elizabeth had odds at issue, but her spirit could not brook inconsequence in her impatient mood.

“Is that a blessing on my way, sir, may I ask?”

The impertinence of her bearing was like a salad to a man who had long fed on hardtack. Here was something worth the mettle of Sir James. This cursed wilderness might, after all, blossom as a rose for an hour.

“My fair lady, it was merely an expression of my surprise that you have an husband; you, with that fresh, virginal charm. If you loosen that mesh of sunshine, which, I presume, you call your hair, take that kerchief from your breast, and change that woollen gown

for more transparent stuff, you are Diana."

The blood swept swiftly to Elizabeth's temples, but the dignity of silence were best.

"Were you born in this desert?" Sir James asked with his tongue; his eyes said other things.

Her spirit rose; wrath warmed it; what right had this ruthless man to question her? But she had her point to gain sorely threatened, now, she understood; and she must pay the price, within bounds.


"I am the daughter of Sir George Harcott, whom, perhaps, you knew before he died."

Ah, that explains it!

"But will you tell me, my lady, why you chose to live in this desolate wilderness, this confounded barren waste?"

Thought flamed in Elizabeth; she looked out of the window over the open country; she forgot Sir James,—all things but David whom she sought; she answered more to herself than to Sir James, “Better the wilderness where love is than London town and an aching heart.”

The sunlight fell upon her, irradiating; love shone within, illumining; she seemed the very incarnation of light and vestal beauty. A man might squander many things to possess her. He looked upon her, and the devil entered into Sir James Trenholm. It was not the first time, but this last state of Sir James Trenholm was worse than any other state had ever been. With a new and more honeyed grace he asked Elizabeth her name. When she had told him, “We could not let the



daughter of Sir George Harcott and David Dearford's wife"—this with an inclination that would seem to do honour to that same David Dearford—"peril her loveliness upon these dangerous roads. The enemy's camp is some distance from here and our army lies between. We beg that she will be our guest for a few days, until we can arrange to have her escorted in safety."

Elizabeth felt an impatience difficult to control; but it were better to commit him to a promise than to cavil at delay; she had confidence in her own power of accomplishment. She knew not Sir James's power for evil.

"Thank you." She assumed the gift already granted. Sir James called his orderly, spoke with him aside. Elizabeth was escorted to a small room

in the blockhouse; it had been recently occupied by the wife of one of the officers, and was not altogether unfeminine in its atmosphere. The attention and conduct made Elizabeth ask herself, "Am I honoured guest or guarded prisoner?"

XVII

AFTER THREE DAYS

PRISONER or guest, the next few days were not without their relish. Elizabeth was many-sided; she had never known the one-grooved phase of life which limits the mass. One side of her was quickened. A long-buried sense awoke within her; London,—her old home, her father's house, her childhood,—were reflected in the men about her; their bearing, their habits, their speech, their easy philosophy of life, recalled her kinsmen and her father's friends; the surface of her thought knew a responsive delight.

Sir James bore himself in all things courteously; he preferred tactics to bludgeons, and he was never in a hurry—at the commencement of a campaign. Three days passed. What had been interesting as a bridge became intolerable as an arrestment. Elizabeth asked for an audience with Sir James. He had been waiting for this. He received her alone.

“Sir James,” she said, “I thank you for your hospitality, but I may not linger here, pleasant as it is. Has not the time come for the fulfilment of your promise?”

The time had come, but not for that. Sir James came nearer to her.

“Mistress Dearford, I have been watching you. You have been breathing your native air these days, and you like it; it becomes you. When first I

saw you, I was conscious of the breaking of the law of harmony. You do not belong here, in this cold and barren country; you are out of your element. Yours is another sphere. The talk of London, the flavour of old days, have been as breath to your nostrils; is it not so?"

"The talk of London and the flavour of old days have been as the wayside flowers that please us on the toilsome journey home."

"No more, Mistress Dearford?"

"No more, Sir James."

"Then I have let my hope beget my thought; I crave your pardon." He bowed elaborately, waited a moment, and continued: "But what if, to another, that wayside flower should chance to be the amaranth of life?" There was no mistaking his eyes; he had made no covenant with them.

Elizabeth's gaze was direct, untremulous. "I should be sorry for him, very sorry, Sir James."

"Nay, the one to pity would be yourself, saving you were gracious." The wolf showed for a moment beneath the fleecy garment of courtly bearing.

"Does graciousness lie in taking chaff for wheat?"

"Let us have done with metaphor, Mistress Dearford; it is but fitting that you should be gracious to the guerdon I lay at your feet."

"Your promise fulfilled, Sir James?"

"Myself, Mistress Dearford." An invisible veil fell; it concealed Elizabeth and revealed her the more.

"Pray do not indulge in pleasantries, Sir James, at my expense or at your own."

“Pleasantries! Great Jove! do you not see I love you?” Nearer he came and strove to take her hand.

So the lioness springs as Elizabeth sprang then. “Do not touch me! Do not dare!” she said.

“Dare!” Trenholm’s smile was cruel and impudent. “My Lady Disdain, think you there is anything I dare not do?”

“Yes, that——”

“That is the one thing I dare do. I love you.”

“Blasphemer! you do not know the meaning of the name.”

“Be that as it may, I know your name; it is the same. Will you not listen to love? You shall go back to England—you shall——”

“Hush! you profane the air.”

“Love cannot profane the air.”

“Open that door, sir, and let me pass!”

“Do you think for one moment that I will open the door?”

She knew he would not; she had known it when he had moved from his seat and taken his place before it. Her strength against his would be but as the reed before the tempest. There was the window—recourse of heroines in novels; but she knew a sentinel paced beneath; she would but rush upon her doom. What was she—an unknown woman, caught trespassing, in the hands of a hostile army? Her heart sent up a cry for help; outwardly she bore herself as unafraid.

“Yes, I think you will open the door,”—her blue-grey eyes were black —“because it is the habit of great countries and their representatives to

be magnanimous to their conquered foe."

"Pardon me, my lady; you are not a conquered foe. I would to the Lord you were!—you are a prisoner of war."

"Nations are judged, Sir James, by the manner in which they treat their prisoners of war."

"But you are something else,"—his roving eyes surveyed her,—“you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and, by gad! I will not be gain-said."

He came nearer—he took her in his arms—she felt his hot breath upon her face,—O merciful God, who madest man!—she felt his breath upon her face, his kisses on her hair, her cheek. Numbness, blackness, a horror of great darkness was enveloping her.

"Sir James!" Ha! What is this

coaxing softness of persuasion that has crept into her wooing voice?

“Yes.”

“The bird that nestles in the hand is better than the bird that beats the air—is it not so?”

“Assuredly”; his voice matched hers.

“Then wait, *mon ami*; wait.”

There was in the word “wait” that which held a prescient reward glorious for waiting. Then she was like all other women, after all. That little foray had been but coquetry to whet his appetite. This was a more spicy adventure than he had hoped. Sir James Trenholm was an epicure; a well-prepared feast was better than a stolen orgy; the latter should be taken only when it was that or nothing. The hot hunger to devour gave way to a delicious satisfaction in the savour

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of a sweet morsel rolled under the tongue.

“Shall I wait until to-morrow, my fair love?”

“Until I am ready, Sir James.”

By Jove! she was a woman worthy of a king. That caressing “until I am ready” made swifter riot in his pulses; yet it held within the promise of its tone a possibility that none but a dullard, a rustic, would forego.

“Until you are ready, my love? That will be to-morrow. The tide has risen; there is *no mistaking it*; it is the stronger in that it was so long in rising—I will wait until to-morrow.”

“Thank you. I am very weary, now, Sir James; please let me go.”

“Yes, you shall go, and in a manner worthy of my love.”

He opened the door, summoned a

soldier, and gave a hurried order. Elizabeth calculated the distance, the odds against her; no, she must wait; to attempt escape at that moment would be to rush madly upon the inevitable. A guard of men appeared to escort her to her chamber.

“This excess of ceremony scarce befits the place or season,” she said, haughtily.

“It befits the secret that you guard, Madame,”—Sir James bowed low.

She saw that he was binding her with double cords; the significance of his words was intended to convey to her their mutual understanding; but to the guards the suggestion she had been discovered a spy. No fear, then, of her slipping the leash. Sir James did not doubt he had won her—it was not his way to fail with women; but

neither was it his custom to trust them, least of all those who had granted him their favour.

Alone in her chamber, Elizabeth's strength gave way; a death-like faintness overcame her, a blinding shame possessed her.

XVIII

AN APPEAL

THE morning dawned crystal pure.

She was summoned to Sir James—O God! Sir James Trenholm was not the man to let go his prey, and he had a battalion behind him! The guards went with her; they were trained minions of the master; she knew them, lynx-eyed, inexorable. A duller woman would have fought for flight; Elizabeth knew that that would close her doom. On she went, straight into the danger, holding her one chance to her heart.

Sir James took her hand and toyed

with it gracefully. "Sweetheart, you were long in coming. Were you frightened, my beauty?"

His tone showed well his thought; whatever fears were hers, it was but the way of women in delights of love.

"And now, alas!" he continued, "we must wait yet another hour. The General is coming; he is inspecting the line; he stops here for an hour. My aide has told me of his approach."

Ah, she knew it—she knew it! She had heard the rumour yesterday, the fact this morning! She had cast her all upon that single die!

"You must not be seen," he added, hurriedly. "Return to your quarters until he has gone. Confound Burgoyne for coming now!"

Both hands she gave him; her eyes enkindled him. "Do not be long," she

said. At the door she turned: "It is the great General Burgoyne?"

"Yes."

"Why are you not in his place?" This was a question which tickled the outward and the inward ear of Sir James; Elizabeth had estimated well the man.

"May I see him as he passes?" she asked; "I should like to measure him with you."

Trenholm hesitated; the bait was too tempting; he was taller than Burgoyne by one inch.

"Yes, sweetheart; stand in the window at the end of the hall until he has entered; there you can see and not be seen."

The guards understood; the fair rebel wanted to see their General; they did not wonder, their glory in him was

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her opportunity. It was with soldierly pride they took her to the deep embrasure of the window in the hall; there they waited.

Burgoyne came. Elizabeth scanned his face eagerly; her heart rose. He entered the Colonel's room, the door closed, a sentinel paced before it. Every nerve of Elizabeth was tense and taut; with the nice calculation of one skilled in running games, she chose the moment when she and her guards had started to walk down the hall, and when the sentinel, his face turned toward her, was beyond the door on his return beat. Like a doe she slipped them all, reached the door; it yielded to her dextrous touch, and Elizabeth stood before the two men, seated in deep conference.

“In the name of God and justice,

hear me speak, your Excellency!" she said.

General Burgoyne was not the man of amours his enemies have painted; slander and venom are too often mixed with the colours of contemporaneous chroniclers; but he did not deny that a female figure adds a dramatic interest to every situation. He turned and looked upon Elizabeth; her beauty was like unto the dawn of day in the musty room. Here was an episode not without its snap; he knew Trenholm of old,—for once he admired his taste. He looked toward Sir James questioningly. Trenholm laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and answered the look.

"A prisoner of war, who asks for no release."

"A prisoner of lust, your Excellency!" Elizabeth cried, her cheeks

crimson, her eyes aflame. "I sought my husband,—he chances to be your adversary,—but I was a peaceful woman walking on a country road, with no malice toward your army nor toward the King my father served; the noble Lord Howe commanded that such were not to be molested, and I felt that General Burgoyne would not be behind him in clemency."

Burgoyne rose. There is a courtesy of art and a courtesy of heart; Burgoyne had both.

"And then?" he said.

"Then I was taken and brought before that man,"—she denoted Trenholm with an imperious sweep of her hand. "I was promised safe escort, but kept a prisoner for four days; then I was insulted — dishonoured — outraged! It is not for my own sake alone

that I address you, sir, but for the sake of the nation you represent, whose greatness should not stoop to petty cowardice."

"How is this, Colonel?"

The courtly cavalier was the General—terse, concise, direct. Sir James made a gesture of indifference, his lip curled.

"Women are women, as your Excellency knows. It were not worth your while to allow the passionate caprice of a jealous woman, who has sold herself, intrude upon the serious subject of the moment. Why,—" a mocking laugh broke the word,—"the echoes linger in this very room of her impatience for the delights of love; with her hands in mine she bade me hasten my interview with you, that we might have our hour."

Burgoyne turned suddenly upon Elizabeth questioning, penetrating eyes.

"Yes," she said, fearlessly, the hot blood dyeing her face, her brow, her throat; "yes, that is true; it was the only way—the price I paid for my reprieve until you came."

"If then you lied, how now may we believe you?"

Burgoyne's voice was probing, but not discourteous—like the voice of a lawyer to a witness on the stand. Burgoyne was wont to trust his own instincts; he divined Elizabeth; her eyes were not the eyes of women who deceive, and he knew Trenholm. But he would make the case more clear for his own intellectual satisfaction. And interesting to him, also, it was to follow the process of her sophistry to its end.

Elizabeth did not resent the question; her ready intellect met his purpose and approved it. Her confusion left her; she lifted her head with its old uplift.

"What is a lie?" she said, "and where shall lines be drawn? Shall men be knighted for outwitting the enemy by stratagem and by diplomacy, and must a woman fear to use her wit—her only weapon—to save herself from degradation and from shame? What is truth? Is it in word or is it in the soul? Was Jael a liar, or was Judith? Are they not rather recorded in history as the great exemplars of our sex?"

Burgoyne smiled. "Your illustration is an unfortunate one, Madame; those women were working for their nation and betrayed its enemies. We must look to our heads, I see!"

Elizabeth returned his smiling with a quiet gaze; there was a noble dignity about her.

“Your Excellency, were it not shameful logic that a woman may not do as much to guard her honour as she were allowed for national revenge? In politics I have no part, but I was trapped—overpowered. It was my wit, diplomacy,—lies, if you will call it so, against an enemy and a most unseemly man. Were a soldier, bearing papers to your camp, to escape the enemy through any subterfuge and bear his trust safely, he would be approved. If a woman stoops to guard the most sacred trust that God has given her, shall she, then, be condemned? That stooping was the very hardest thing I ever did, but it was done to save myself from shame;

there was no other way, I was forced to take it. Was I wrong?"

"No, Madame, you were right."

"I could have died," she added, "before I came to-day; not yesterday,"—she shuddered,—“then my hands were pinioned, my strength was overpowered; but to-day—yes, I could have taken my life to-day,—it is so easy to die; but I knew you were coming, and I have no right to die needlessly, until I have given my husband the message I have come this perilous way to deliver."

She saw a question dawning in Burgoyne's eyes; she answered the question—it was his right. "It is only a heart message," she said, simply; "it has naught to do with the State. It is to ask him to forgive me."

Burgoyne's eyes shone with sudden

softening. A gracious reverence enwrapped him.

"I believe you, Madame, and I deeply regret the indignity that has been put upon you. It ill becomes our officers to play tricks with mercy or to coquet with justice."

He turned the battery of his eyes upon Trenholm. Trenholm's face had gone behind his mask; with him, lust of the flesh was much, but lust of ambition was more. Burgoyne wrote an order hurriedly and handed it to Elizabeth.

"You may pass unmolested and in peace, wheresoever you will; that paper will be your passport."

"I cannot thank you, sir," Elizabeth said; "but the heart that bid you trust me will know what I would say."

"Your smile would thank any man

for aught that he might do—but we are not thanked for justice.”

He went with her to the door, held it open, gave a few decisive, unmistakable directions to the astonished guard, and bowed low to Elizabeth as she passed on her way. He closed the door and turned to Trenholm. “As we were saying,” he said, “it will take about eleven hundred men and ten pieces of artillery for the attack.”

“Yes, your Excellency,” said Trenholm, “and I think it can be done.”

XIX

VICTORY

ELIZABETH was free! There was nothing now between herself and David; nothing but the pitiful tremor of her limbs, the faintness of her heart; strange mystery of the physical in woman—staunch and steady in danger, fluttering and faint when danger is past.

Pale as the winter snow that was to come, Elizabeth knocked at the door of a hospitable-looking farmhouse and fell across the threshold. Those were not times of questions or suspicions among the inhabitants outside of ac-

tion. The neighbourly became the brotherly, the sisterly, at once.

Elizabeth awoke in the large bed of the best chamber; kind faces bent over her, bidding her sleep. She obeyed, not knowing three days of precious time had passed in the delirium of fever.

“Where am I?” Elizabeth asked on the seventh day.

“Among friends.” The answer was not needed to her returning consciousness; the kind faces had already affirmed it; she put her hand to her head confusedly, pushing back the damp curls.

“How long have I been here?”

At knowledge of seven days she strove to rise. “I cannot wait longer; I must go on.”

“No, no,” the matron answered;

"lie back and do not fret; all is well. The enemy is beaten, praise the Lord!"

"The enemy beaten?" Elizabeth's voice rang stronger.

"Yes; there was a great battle four days ago, two miles from here, at Saratoga. It is the greatest victory that we have won. The Lord be praised for His mercy!"

Elizabeth strove again to rise. "What is—where is—" her voice failed. The gentle hand restrained her.

"Hush, hush, now, pretty one, I'll tell you all. Only you must be quiet and take some of this boneset tea for strengthening; you've been very sick, poor dear. Our men have beaten the enemy; we smote them hip and thigh; the Lord was gracious unto us. The two armies are looking into each other's faces now and settling their debts."

The good news was better than bone-set; Elizabeth rallied quickly. The third day she bade farewell to her kind hostess.

The white tents of the American camp! The new flag of red and blue and white floating and flapping in the high October wind! It tells the story—Victory!

Crude in make, those first flags, but not crude in purpose or significance!

“My husband, David Dearford,—may I see him?” Elizabeth asked of an officer in charge.

The man looked at her, noted her wan, white face and drooping form. “Dearford? Colonel Dearford?” he said. “Too bad, my good woman, you are too late.”

TOO LATE! How can such things be borne? Too late—too late! If she

could speak, ask, know! The world is a chaos; her eyes are stone-blind; she cannot see the man before her; she cannot hear; her tongue cleaves to the roof of her mouth. She must master faintness; she must straighten out her swaying brain; she *must* hear how he died, when—where—all. Every effort ends in a black blank. The first sense of consciousness she has is the sharp taste of brandy. Then she hears; then she understands.

“Not dead. No, no, Mistress Dearford; he is not dead, only badly wounded and sent home for you to nurse; he left yesterday on his well-earned furlough. Keep up a good heart; you will pull him through, please God. See to it that you do it quickly and send him back. We need him sorely; he is one of our bravest men.”

XX

SURRENDER

WOMEN, for good or evil, appeared from time to time in camp; so seldom, however, the sight of one was an event. That David Dearford's wife had dropped from the skies soon spread.

"If you do not mind a soldier's rude quarters and a soldier's frugal fare, Madam, I hope you will do me the honour to dine with me. David Dearford's wife must be one with us this day."

Elizabeth turned. An officer stood uncovered before her. The noble,

unruffled face, the serene eyes from which looked the soul whose magnanimity in waiving personal resentment had made victory for his country possible, rested Elizabeth at once. She held out her hand.

"Thank you, General Schuyler; it will give me much pleasure."

"Then you know me, Madam?"

"I know you can be only you. David has told me of your kindness to him."

"Kindness! My dear young friend, we must find some other name for deeds done to David Dearford. You may be proud of your husband, Madam,—proud of him."

"I am."

"Come, Madam, you need refreshment, and we must get out of the way, back into hiding as quickly as possible to escape the British."

“To escape the British?”

“Yes; we want to turn our backs and run into hiding from them this day.” The sparkling twinkle in the bright eyes changed at Elizabeth’s puzzled look; seriousness deepened them as he explained: “It is appointed this morning that the British army lay down their arms—a ceremony required in the Articles of Surrender; and, my dear lady, the only time a soldier ever wants to turn his back on the enemy is when that enemy has been made to lay down his arms.”

General Schuyler received Elizabeth into his austere quarters—a drawing-room for courtesy. Wine and biscuit refreshed her.

At noon a hush fell upon the camp. The British army was marching down to the meadow by the brook. The

meadow blossomed with goldenrod and autumn daisies. Beyond the meadow tall, sombre pines stood like sentinels watching the event, and flaming maple trees tossed their bright branches like banners. Far off the mountains of Vermont loomed in the purple panoply of autumn.

With dignity and noble bearing, as though it were a sacrificial act, the British soldiers walked into the meadow and stacked their arms. Empty-handed they returned to pass their foe. Proudly and with level gaze they walked.

Emotion choked Elizabeth. These men were her countrymen. The arms left in surrender under the October sky were the arms of her native land. The drooping colours that the men bore were the colours for which her kinsmen

had died since Harcott was a name. An impulse seized her to run out and place herself beside these men, sharing their humiliation, tasting their bitterness. But a counter-current stayed her,—a new pride in David's countrymen. Not one taunt along the line; not one word, not one comment; scarcely a soldier to be seen outside his tent; silence and reverent pity mingled with admiration for a gallant foe that had been conquered, but not vanquished.

The ceremony finished, General Schuyler and the officers with him went out. Elizabeth was glad of a quiet hour in which to collect her thoughts, to fight this terror that was haunting her. Surely David could not be mortally wounded, or he would never have started on the journey home. He was

so strong, so full of reserve vigour,—all must, all *shall* be well, she thought. Hark—a child's voice! Here, in camp? As the voices drew nearer she distinguished the *ichs* and *dichs* of the German tongue. General Schuyler entered, two children clinging to one hand; beside him a tall and handsome woman, the Baroness Riedesel.

The children went to Elizabeth with instinctive trust. They were pale, tired, and thoroughly frightened, but quick of reaction, as children are, when danger lifts. The Baroness told her story to eager ears—that story which she has chronicled in her *Memoirs* for all the world to read. Elizabeth preferred the childish version of those tragic days, whispered to her between the pauses of the mother's talk.

“It was so dark,” the child said, in

her pretty German treble; "you know you don't mind being afraid in the light; but when it's dark you cannot see what you are afraid of. Are you a rebel, *gnädige Frau*? Oh, no, I know you are not a rebel, because you are much too nice," and the little head nestled closer to Elizabeth's encircling arm.

"Do you know what a rebel is, *liebchen*?" Elizabeth asked, smiling.

"A rebel—a rebel," the child pondered. "Why, a rebel is a person who does not think what father thinks."

After dinner came Burgoyne. His face lighted when he saw Elizabeth.

"I am very glad, Madam, that you are safe."

Elizabeth made a low courtesy; when she had been his prisoner she had bowed.

"Thank you, your Excellency. I owe it to you. I am very grateful."

"Pardon me, Madam. You owe it to the convincing and compelling power within yourself. The chances of war, you see, have brought me ill fortune."

"Ah, no, your Excellency; it has been well said that 'ill fortune becomes good fortune when it is nobly borne.' One might say that you had gained a victory."

Elizabeth bade General Schuyler good-bye.

"But, Madam, you are not going? You have not rested. Surely you cannot start upon a journey now!"

Elizabeth explained that there was a farmhouse within a mile where she was much at home. She would pass the night there and start at dawn to follow David.

General Schuyler, with regret that his duties prevented him from doing so himself, called one of his officers to escort Elizabeth to her shelter.

Burgoyne bowed over her hand. "Were it not for this Convention of Saratoga, which restricts my movements somewhat," he said, smiling, "I should claim that honour."

XXI

CLAIRVOYANCE

DAVID had been seriously wounded in the battle of Saratoga. He was not fit for travel, but no persuasion could keep him in camp; the surgeon's protest and his prophecy availed not. David knew what would help him most; his own needs were borne in upon him by his pain. If he could but once look upon Elizabeth's face and feel the touch of her hands, it would be better than all the drugs in the commissariat. Characteristic pluck and grit rose for the long journey.

That matchless poet, who wrote the

immortal book of Job, knew human nature well when he made the arch-tempter reserve physical suffering for a supreme and final test with potency to reveal the man Job unto himself.

David had never known physical pain or weariness. David had never been idle. Even in stage-coach journeyings heretofore he had been mentally absorbed in the enterprise upon which he had been bent. Now, he knew pain and inaction through all the day, and, with small surcease, through the night; he could not sleep. The stage-coach lurched and plunged over the rough roads like a ship at sea.

Is it not more righteous to turn away from the call of the present moment, sometimes, to face the larger duty of the ultimate moment? David had never asked himself this question. The

immediate duty of the moment had always taken his every energy hitherto. Fate answered for him now in the affirmative. He was shut up in a stage-coach for some days; a fine mist hid the landscape, bare and sodden from the autumn winds and rains.

And David thought. As the stage rumbled on, he reviewed his life; his boyhood's home, a hard, uncompromising atmosphere, where emotion was looked upon as weakness, and individual interpretation as sin; his days at Harvard—the continual stirring of startling delight at the new-old world of intellectual surprise that opened to him, and then the firm turning away from that delight, as he had been taught to turn, into covert of stern theology; his busy manhood, each day pressed close with things to be done; that trip to

England to see Sir George Harcott on practical affairs, carrying letters from the Governor of Massachusetts, which opened wide all doors for him.

Out of the past flashed a memory more poignant than the rest; it held his thought enthralled as he relived it, and all that followed. It was the memory of that day he had sat at dinner in the stately Harcott dining-room and had looked across the table into a new world that lay, all nebulous, deep in unfathomable eyes. He recalled the swift conclusion, characteristic, that this world was his discovery, and, therefore, must belong to him, no matter what obstacle stood in the way; the proud withholding and afterward the gracious, complete surrender of the radiant Elizabeth to his hasty, indomitable siege; the bluff frankness of Sir

George Harcott, which had raised no question in David's made-up mind—

“I do not approve of it, sir. I have no objection to you; but it's a mistake, a great mistake, for a bride to have to swallow the ocean. However, Bess has always had her own way, and she always will, sir, she always will.”

Then he relived that brief span when his normal life was suspended and he had seemed to live in the Canticles; the home-coming, the crowding duties, the taking up his active life; Elizabeth's loneliness—he had never thought of that before! He thought of it now. Driven to the subjective by circumstance, he saw what woman's life must be. How long the time must have seemed to her, waiting, while he had been in the active rush of life, *working*! If she, the woman, had felt for two


years what he, in his weakness, his pain, was feeling for the first time, it must have been hard for her to bear. Had he been just and fair to put that burden upon her? After all, had he fulfilled his largest and his only duty? Was there not a duty to her as well as to the State? How much of tradition, how much of pride of conscience, had entered into his sacrifice in refusing to take his furlough? His course had seemed quite clear to him, and he had commended himself upon his steadfast adherence to his obligation; but he began to see that duty, like truth and all high things, is often hidden—veiled, and must be sought with reverent and seeking mind.

Then David did a thing a man is seldom apt to do; but sick men take on women's ways; this is no discourtesy

to either sex; ways are only ways after all; it is the goal that counts. He took out Elizabeth's letters, and there, in the jolting stage-coach, wrapped close in his old army blanket, the worse for wear, he read the letters over one by one.

No one else was in the coach; that is, no one save Love, the great Teacher. Love was there. No stranger to David in reality; but since that brief time of dalliance David had been too busy to look long upon his face.

Now, he looked and understood. As he reread the letters, he saw them as they were. A clairvoyant consciousness possessed him,—that same consciousness which he had had so keenly that one night in his tent and had lost as swiftly the next morning. This time the clairvoyant sense stayed. The



letter, written in response to his decision not to return to Sutton at the end of that year, which had angered him then, he read again.

“It was the cry of her heart,” he said aloud. “I should have known. Women do not choose language when they cry. I should have known and gone to her, if but for a single day.”

The letter, with the extract defaming marriage, gave a curious tug at his firm heart.

“She meant me to deny this! I should have done so. Fool that I was!”

A feverish impatience pressed him on. How slowly the coach went!

“Just stop here over night,” the landlord said, at Worcester, “and go on in the morning. You’ll die on the

way, Colonel, if you go on to-night. You are burning up with fever now."

"I'm all right, Mr. Adams," David answered. "Give me some brandy, please; I must get home." His white lips smiled feebly. "If I should lie down in that bed of yours, Mr. Adams, I should never get up, and it would be bad luck for your house to have a death here."

"It would be a great pleasure and a proud day, Colonel Dearford, to have you die in this house."

"Thank you," David laughed; "a dubious compliment."

XXII

CLOSED SHUTTERS

DAVID opened the garden gate; he scanned the windows of his home; his pulses beat tensely. Through all his journey he had foreseen the fair face there, the sun shining on that dear head, and that radiant smile of hers—surprised. The shutters were closed, the windows blank.

He has reached the porch and stands trembling a moment to gather strength to enter. Some one is unlocking the door. He grasps the rail of the porch. Will Elizabeth come forth in her beauty as of old? It opens, and Miranda,

with scouring soap and cleaning-cloths, stands upon the threshold. She whitens to the lips as she sees her master.

“Where is your mistress, Miranda?”

“She has gone to England, sir,” Miranda answered without preface or preamble: better so; a quick shot is ever better than a jagged saw.

David staggered into the house; he was faint and very weary from his long journey. The Martha spirit was aroused in Miranda; she straightway began her ministrations.

“Not yet, Miranda; I should like to be alone now for a while.”

David’s tone sent Miranda to the kitchen.

Every step cost him great pain, but slowly, leaning heavily on the light mahogany rail, David climbed the stairs to their bedroom—his room and

Elizabeth's. It was dark, clean, silent—a funereal order everywhere. He limped to the window and unbarred the shutters; from the window he limped to the closet, opened the door, and stood gazing upon a soft, white woollen dress. Then the hands which had lately gripped the sword-hilt gathered the folds of the dress—tender, caressing.

“O Lord,” he said, “have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me! ‘I sought her whom my soul loveth, I sought her and I found her not.’ ”

Then he closed the closet door and called Miranda.

XXIII

MIRANDA

“**L**IE still, sir. The doctor has bled you and you must n’t move.”

Miranda’s hour had come. The servingwoman was despot.

David was infinitely tired. He lifted the heavy lids of his aching eyes. The backbone of Miranda made him so weary he quickly closed them again.

“A drink, Miranda, please, a drink of very cold water.”

Miranda brought him some hot broth.

“Miranda,” David pleaded feebly, “you have stuffed up even the cracks

of the windows; open them wide—wide, and give me fresh air!”

Miranda went out and closed the door into the hall, stuffing in some wool from the other side.

David fell asleep. Suddenly he awoke. Was he dying? Was his flesh dissolving? What was this burning, biting, stinging, stunning pain? His wound was in a blazing fire of agony. The brave man groaned.

The faithful Miranda appeared on the instant. Her backbone looked straighter in the flannel night protector; her flannel night-cap on her grey-sprinkled head gave her an air of martial authority.

“That’s good for you, sir,” she said; “I’ve nursed cases, and mustard plasters are the best things to draw out pain. Go to sleep, sir.”

“Go to sleep! Do you mean to say you put a mustard plaster near my wound? Augustus Cæsar!” David hurled the plaster to the floor.

“Augustus Cæsar is n’t here, sir,” Miranda answered tartly. “The doctor said you must n’t have any company for a few days. It’s a pity you took off the plaster. It is n’t on the wound—only near where it’s red— Mustard plaster is the best thing for pain.”

“Oh, woman of one idea! Don’t you know there’s pain and pain?”

“Of course there’s pain; that’s why I put it on.”

“You don’t understand. What did the pain of your other patient come from?”

“Green apples,” snapped Miranda, “but pain’s pain.”

“Let me go to sleep,” David said

wearily, "and never dare put one of those abominable things on me again!"

Miranda left him without comment. David was getting quiet, the boon of sleep was just in sight. A slight noise disturbed him. He opened one eye, the one on the pillow which could not be seen. Miranda was stealthily approaching the bed, a fat mustard plaster about ten inches square pulled straight between her clenched fists. As she bent over him, thinking him asleep, David quickly grasped her two wrists.

"Drop it!" he said, sternly.

Miranda stood by her mustard plaster as a soldier stands by his guns.

"He who lays violent hands on a woman is under the law," she said, sententiously. She was not quite sure if this was the Old or the New Testa-

ment, but she had heard it somewhere, and was quite sure it must be a text.

"You'll be under the law if you don't obey me," David roared. "Drop the damned thing!"

"The damned thing!" Was this David?—David Dearford—Deacon in the Church—the Congregational Church of Sutton? "*The damned thing!*" Miranda wished her nightcap had been made of deafening uncarded wool. A mustard plaster was not the thing that David needed; it was not his body that was in sore straits; she could serve him better in another way. With solemn dignity Miranda left the room, still holding the mustard plaster between her clenched fists. In her own room she knelt in prayer.

"That woman is worse than the British army," David said. "Now her

righteous ears are vexed—and justly. Miranda — Miranda — *Miranda!*” he called.

The nightcapped head was thrust in at the door, held open only far enough to admit it. A God-fearing man Miranda could nurse as she would nurse an innocent infant, but here was a swearing army trooper, she said to herself; that went too far for her virgin reserve.

“Miranda,” David said, “forgive my impatience; forgive my intemperate speech.”

“I’m not the Lord, sir”; the flannel nightcap bobbed severely.

“No; but will you forgive me?”


“I’ve nothing to forgive,” she snapped; “that swear lies between you and Him.”

“He will forgive me, I know; and, please, do you?”

“Is there anything you want, sir?”
Miranda asked, conclusively.

“Oh, yes—yes, Miranda; please give me a drink of cold water—very cold.”

Miranda disappeared and was gone for some time. When she returned she brought David a bowl of steaming broth. David groaned and said there was nothing more she could do. After much tossing he fell asleep, and in his sleep the gracious form of Elizabeth stood beside him. Her cool hands parted the hair on his hot brow.



XXIV

UNBOUND

THE next day David's bearing was so like the old David, Miranda was consoled; that unrighteous word had been but an echo of the camp in the delirium of fever, she assured herself; she renewed her ministrations.

David resigned himself—within limits. He must make every effort to get well. There was a duty waiting to be done. After a few days, by dint of diplomacy and argument, he succeeded in persuading the doctor to allow him to sit up.

Hiram Greene had gone to the war,

and all the active men of Sutton. John Martin had not gone, and David's home-coming was a boon to his restless regret at his inability. He hastened to David, at the first permission, choking with questions and with talk. Toward the end of his visit he ventured, hesitatingly:

"David, my lips have been itching to ask you a question ever since I came in, but I did n't quite like to ask it for fear you would think it was none of my concerns."

A wan smile hovered around the corners of David's mouth; he knew quite well what the question would be.

"Ask it, Mr. Martin."

John Martin ahem'd and hawed a few times before he took advantage of this granted privilege.

"It's about Mistress Dearford."

“Yes,” said David, tersely.

“Is it true, what gossips say, David, that she has gone to England?”

“It is true, Mr. Martin.”

“Well, I vum! I did n’t half believe it, though it is on every tongue. It’s a pretty bad business for a brave soldier to come home to be nursed by his wife and find her gone.”

David looked up quickly. “Mr. Martin, I am waiting to get well to confess my sin before men.”

“Your sin?” John Martin said, mystified.

“Yes, my sin. You condemn Elizabeth for leaving her husband, her home, and for going to England. Let me tell you, Mr. Martin, that, if fault there be, it is mine, altogether mine.”

“Yours, David?”

“Yes, mine. I drove Elizabeth, and

—pardon me, you and the Church also drove her—into any act she may have committed. I only thank God she was too pure of heart to do a worse thing than go home to her own people.”

Surely, John Martin thought, Miranda was right; David Dearford was in the throes of fever, he must reassure him.

“David Dearford, you but did your duty; you could have done no less.”

“Mr. Martin, I have changed my mind about duty.” Even if fever, this was startling. John Martin dropped his jaw, awaiting the sequel. “Yes,” David continued, “I have come to the conclusion that there may be slavery in duty even as there is slavery in sin, and that all slavery is weakening to manhood. Understand me,”—he answered the look in John Martin’s eyes,

—"I believe more firmly than ever in the larger duty, but I believe that duty, to be of real value, to have a vital virtue, must be spontaneous, must have its root in something larger, vaster than itself."

David knew John Martin to be a staunchly upright man of shrewd common sense, even though rigidly narrow and somewhat slow of mind; he had been to David, in many ways, like an elder brother; therefore David wished to state his thought clearly, if possible.

"I am glad to have this talk with you, Mr. Martin, for I should very much like to tell you that I have learned many things since I went out of this town, which I had scarcely left before, save for that hurried business journey to England four years ago. I have learned that conscience can claim no

jurisdiction whatever, save in a man's own soul; that when what we call duty forces us to infringe or impinge upon another's right of conscience and standard, it is not duty in the highest sense, but slavery to tradition, dogma—perhaps to stubborn self. I have also learned that liberty of liberty is as valuable as liberty of one's own special creed; *more* valuable to a large-minded man in that it involves larger issues."

The bombshell in John Martin's conservative mind was stirring up too great a commotion for him to answer just then; to gain time he asked, "Where have you learned all that, David Dearford?"

"From many sources: contact with life; the operating of universal forces in my own soul, which had been shut all my days into the three square miles

of this town where I was born; from my wife, the memory of whose fair life and noble words followed me; and from the daily living with other men of different ideas and wider culture. Yes, Mr. Martin, truth is broader than Sutton, and the Congregational Church is not the only salvation known to man. Why, General Washington is an Episcopalian." There was a twinkle in David's eyes.

"I know it." John Martin's voice was sharp; this was a very sore point with him, as David was well aware.

"Washington is a hero!" There was something in David's "Washington" that suggested a cheer. "Listen, Mr. Martin, I want to read you something." David's eyes were good to look upon. "Listen to this." David took from his pocket his pouch, opened it, found

a paper soiled and much worn. "Pardon the untidiness of this paper, but I have read it to pieces," David said smiling. "You know I was with Benedict Arnold," he continued in explanation.

"Yes, a very brave man."

"Too brave," said David briefly.

"Too brave, David Dearford?"

"Far be it from me to criticise my General, but I can say to you here, confidentially, he seems to me brave of nerve rather than brave of head. I fear he would be too quick to rush upon some rash folly, did it chance."

"Ay, ay; but Washington, for all he is an Episcopalian, knows how to hold such men in check."

"In truth he does. When we were starting on that fatal expedition to Canada, General Washington wrote


Arnold a long personal letter besides the letter of general instructions. Arnold, who was kindness itself to me, showed me the letter, and, at my solicitation, allowed me to copy this extract. I wanted to keep these words, because the reading of them was a turning point in my life. It started me thinking in a new direction, and, once started thinking, I *thought!* Mark them, Mr. Martin, they are words for a man to remember.

“I also give in charge to you, to avoid all disrespect to the religion of the country and its ceremonies. . . . While we are contending for our own liberty, we should be very cautious not to violate the rights of conscience in others, ever considering that God alone is the Judge of the hearts of men, and

to Him only, in this case, are they answerable.' ”

Persistent John Martin must needs go back to the case in point. “But when a woman does n't hold to the doctrines of the church of which she is a member she is a dead branch and ought to be lopped off.”

“Ah! there is the mistake,” David answered; “the mistake which all churches make, to their misfortune. Elizabeth was a living branch of truth, purity, and beauty of character. And to cut off living branches for this or that doctrinal difference will soon make a dead church. We judged Elizabeth for her intellectual conclusion, her spiritual vision; and we dared to separate her from Christian fellowship. May God forgive us! Poor child!”



John Martin felt the situation was beyond argument just then; he must go home to think and read. His worried eyes rounded under their shaggy brows, his jaw still kept its relaxed surprise. "Well, you have changed quite a considerable, have n't you, David Dearford?"

"I hope so," David answered, a sudden fire lighting his pale, sharpened face; "I hope so, with all my heart. No man, no people, Mr. Martin, are at their best who stay to-day where they were yesterday, or to-morrow where they are to-day. Change, progress, is the condition of growth, and growth is life."

"Unless it's fungus," John Martin remarked stiffly. He rose to take his leave; then, instead, he crossed his hands behind his back and stood contemplating David with an anxious

gaze; finally he said, "I fear the army has been bad business for you, David. Such changes betoken no good."

"Why should not a man change, Mr. Martin? If a tree stops growing it dies and is cut down. We are taught from boyhood that development is the law of life. Is conscience an exception? Does conscience reach its ultimate immediately and have no room for development? I am convinced the very opposite of this is true. The conscience that stays in traditional and hereditary moulds and blossoms not unto individual fruitage is more formal than righteous. It is barren of the vital elements of progress."

"And what's progress?" sniffed Mr. Martin, impatiently.

"Progress is the mortal side of immortality."

“Those are very fine words, David Dearford, but the common sense of it is that if you’ve got the light, you’ve got it, and there’s nothing to grow to.”

“True, Mr. Martin, but the light of infinite truth cannot come suddenly to finite man. It rises in a man’s soul as the sun rises to his eyes: first, the dawn, then the morning, then the full noontide. What seems like change is only going on.”

“You’d better be careful where you go on to, David Dearford; you may go over a precipice. It behoves a man to remember that the devil is a subtle enemy and has subtle persuasion; a man had better keep his ears tight stopped.”

“Mr. Martin, I want to be quite honest with you, it is your due. Perhaps the greatest change that has

come to me in these two years is this: I have taken the cotton out of my ears, and I now desire to hear all that the devil has to say on certain subjects."

The lines of anxiety deepened perceptibly in old John Martin's face; a look of pain came into his eyes—David had always been a favourite of his: David saw it. With great difficulty he rose and limped toward the older man; he laid his hand affectionately on John Martin's shoulder.

"Mr. Martin, have no fear. Light is stronger than darkness, good is stronger than evil, God is greater than any devil. To be afraid to hear all sides of any question implies a doubt of this."

John Martin shook his head ruminatingly. "So you are prepared to listen to the devil—prepared to listen to the devil! David Dearford, do you know,

it sounds to me mightily as though you were bewitched."

John Martin prided himself that he was above superstition, but his great-grandfather had helped to light the fires of Salem. Remembrance lingers in the blood.

"Mr. Martin, I am," David smiled; he could not deny himself this little ghost of fun; and then he had a swift, delicious vision of Elizabeth.

John Martin's face relaxed, a gleam of hope and of relief came into it. He took David's hand and led him back to his seat.

"Well, well, now," he said, soothingly; "we've had a nice talk, but I must go. My old mare is just like all women—she objects to waiting."

He bade David good-bye and went out of the door. Then he drove quickly


around to the back of the house and beckoned vigorously to Miranda. Miranda came out at once—gingham apron and floury hands; she could not detain a Deacon of the Church. John Martin leaned over his gig and pointed with his long, bony finger to the house. "Keep close watch, Miranda," he whispered, "and send for me if you need any help. He's clean gone crazy."

XXV

HOME

DAVID sat by the window in the old room. His thin hands lay limp upon his knees. He was looking out at the sodden earth, at the leaden sky. The trees were bare, the leaves had fallen; swift eddies of wind whirled them like brown birds back and forth before the window. The hollyhocks and roses in the garden had long been dead; the honeysuckle vine was withered on the porch; the grass on the borders of the flower-beds was sere and dry. How bleak the wind blew! David thought of Elizabeth upon the

sea, alone. Dear heart—how desolate! David remembered the wedding voyage; she had turned to him then when the sea was rough, when the winds were wild. How the dear head had nestled to his breast! How the warm arms had clung! Had there not come to him in those sacred hours a livelier sense of immortality, a swifter consciousness of God, than in many hours of rigid worship? Was Elizabeth, after all, nearer the truth than he had thought when she argued that duty and delight are often one; that we sometimes learn more of God through those we love in moments of love than we can learn in any other way? Was there some wisdom in her claim, often so tenderly urged, that the divine Word may be made flesh in the lesser as in the greater way? And that the mystery of the



Incarnation may have its lesser fulfilment in humanity as it has its supreme fulfilment in the Christ? He did not know, he was not sure; but this he did know, that, however it may have been with his dogma and his intellectual grasp—the keen, vital consciousness of the Unseen, the personal apprehension of the personality of God had never, before or since, been to him what it was in those two years when Elizabeth was beside him. He had not agreed with her in many things; he had not approved of her often, but he was forced to admit that with her beside him, her love about him, he had possessed a more living belief in the truths which he did not doubt.

If he got well, he would seek her across the sea; he would tell her what he had learned; tell her that at last he

had begun to apprehend many things; to understand anew; he would comfort her, solace her, woo her, win her back.

Ah! If!—The wound was deep, the days were chill, his strength was low.

And if not—well, then for ever there is that blessed country where there is no more sea.

The door that led to the kitchen made a clicking sound. “Miranda,” he said, in a weak voice,—“Miranda, will you give me some of that chicken broth, please? I am sure it will make me stronger.” He did not turn his head. He sat gazing languidly out upon the desolate garden, the sullen sky.

Miranda did not answer. He had been mistaken. The room was very still.

Suddenly David was aware of a

strange prescience; a curious sense, not all of dread, passed over him. "I am a prey to a sick man's fancy," he thought. Listen! It surely is no fancy; there *is* a presence in the room—the soft rustle of a gown, a light step upon the floor, and then his name, the low, sweet call, "David—David!"

"Elizabeth—sweetheart—*you!*"

"David, are you much hurt? Tell me."

"Not much, now, sweetheart."

"Will you be well soon?"

"Yes, very soon, now, Elizabeth." He gathered her to himself, thanking God.

"David," she said at last, "I followed you, I missed you. I have been to Saratoga."

"*To Saratoga!*"

She told him all—her danger, her

despair, her heart. And David answered her with his own story, so like in difference. They talked until the twilight closed.

Then there was silence in the room—a long, deep, enfolding silence.

THE END

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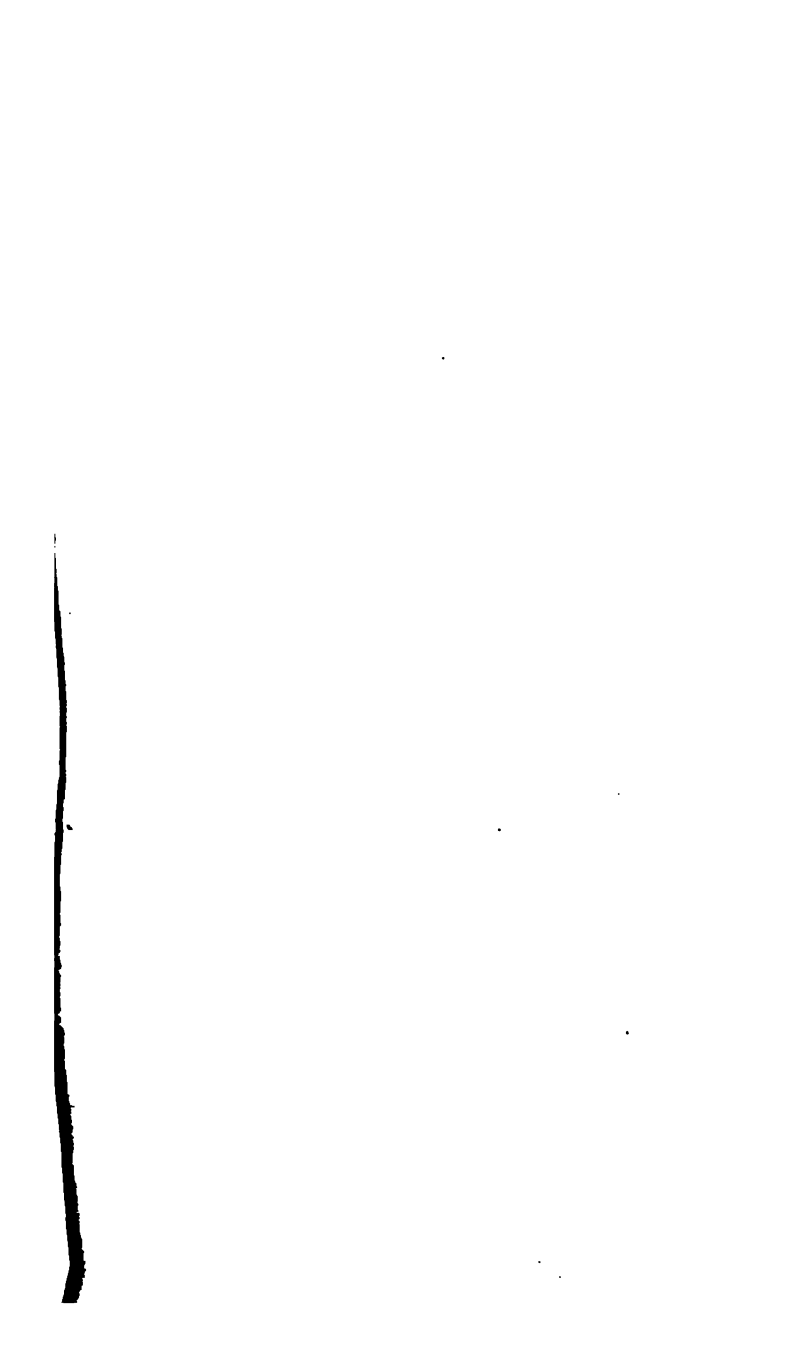
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